

WIN! 20 Panasonic FZ-10 3DO systems WIN!



3DO

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Magazine Gold

The 3DO Story

revolutionary hardware

Inside info on the world's first superconsole

the most games

Up-to-date reviews of every UK game

future-proof

Latest details on world-beating 64bit upgrade

3D Atlas
Alone In The Dark
Another World
Ballz
Battle Chess
BattleSport
BladeForce
Burning Soldier
Cannon Fodder
Captain Quaxar
D
Daedalus Encounter
Demolition Man
Dragon's Lair
Family Feud
FIFA International
Soccer
Flashback
Flying Nightmares
Gex
Gridders
Hell
The Horde
Icebreaker
Immercenary
Incredible Machine
Iron Angel Of
The Apocalypse
Jammit

John Madden
Football
Killing Time
Kingdom:
The Far Reaches
Lost Eden
Lost Files Of
Sherlock Holmes
Mazer
MegaRace
Monster Manor
Myst
Need For Speed
Night Trap
Off-World
Interceptor
Operation JumpGate
Panzer General
Pataank
Powers Kingdom
Quarantine
Real Pinball
Rebel Assault
Return Fire
Rise Of The Robots
Road Rash
Samurai Shodown
Scramble Cobra
Sewer Shark

Shanghai Triple
Threat
Shock Wave
Slam 'n' Jam '95
Slayer
Soccer Kid
Space Hulk
Space Pirates
StarBlade
Station Invasion
Star Control II
Striker
Super Street
Fighter II Turbo
Super Wing
Commander
Supreme Warrior
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**132 page
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Action Adventure

The Ultimate

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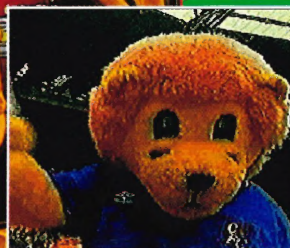
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3DO

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Rage
Software

Panasonic®



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nture Horror

Interactive Science Fiction Adventure



of a war torn galaxy, a single scavenger craft hurls toward an alien sun. Snagged
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you. As Casey, you straddle the line between man and machine, your brain cradled in a
mechanical probe. Relying on your wits and strange new form, you and your fellow crew
(Tia Carrere) and Zack (Christian Bocher), scramble to avoid becoming the next solar flare.
challenge of this 4 CD, sci-fi adventure, with over two hours of live action video
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- Stunning visuals, full motion video, advanced computer graphics achieved with ground-breaking technology.
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Virgin

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3DO

Magazine Gold

Welcome To The Revolution

In 1993, 3DO revolutionised the world of videogames with a unique new format. Its custom hardware offered performance far beyond top-of-the-line PCs, let alone the antiquated 16bit technology of the Mega Drive or SNES. At a time when CD PC games were a rarity, 3DO offered CD as standard with built-in FMV and 650 times the storage space of most cart games. It was ahead of its time and developers had to rethink how they worked to best exploit its power.

Three years later, the amazingly varied and ambitious library of 3DO games is a tribute to their success. While some consoles rely on conversions of coin-ops designed for a few quick plays down the arcade, 3DO has games designed for the home with the depth and realism that allows. Months of entertainment rather than weeks are contained within its games. *Need For Speed* offers eight of the world's most glamorous cars and three huge courses with ultra-realistic handling. *Space Hulk* combines a *Doom*-perspective with intense tactical gameplay and the nerve-tingling ambience of the movie *Aliens*. *Killing Time* mixes realtime gunplay with FMV ghosts in a haunted house blaster that involves several new software patents. Just like the 3DO system itself, 3DO games are trailblazing the way forward for home entertainment. The range of titles available this Christmas is beyond compare in its quality, depth and variety.

For the future, Matsushita's recent purchase of 3DO M2 technology for \$100 million provides an assured upgrade path to the world's most powerful videogames technology. Matsushita is the world's largest consumer electronics company, twice the size of Sony, and its plans for M2 go far beyond videogames with MPEG2 Digital Video Discs and Internet applications on the horizon. For future-proof hardware and cutting edge games, 3DO is the only choice. ☐ **stuart wynne**



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Inside 3DO

The 3DO system isn't simply another videogames console, it's an ambitious attempt to define a worldwide standard for interactive technology backed by some of the world's biggest corporations. Below we review its history, the inside story on its technology and cast an eye over some hi-tech peripherals.

Why 3DO? Because we wanted something like stereo or radio. Something ubiquitous, explains 3DO CEO Trip Hawkins. It's a new name for a new machine: not just another console, but a multiplayer which besides games also plays music CDs, PhotoCDs and – with M2's built-in MPEG upgrade – VideoCDs. Even more importantly, it's also the name of a standard which, like VHS for video recorders, means anyone can build a 3DO machine as long as they pay a modest fee to the standard's creators. In 1995 3DO systems were in production with Creative Labs, GoldStar, Panasonic and Sanyo. Different shapes, different colours – but all 3DO systems. If the plan works, 3DO hardware really could be just as much as part of every one's furniture as stereos or videos.

The man behind the plan is Trip Hawkins, a visionary character much like Bill Gates or Clive Sinclair. His life story is a TV movie script: after a childhood obsessed with games he went to Harvard, designed his own course in game theory, and planned how he would found a games company in seven years time. After a highly successful career with Apple Computer, he left it right on schedule, in 1982, and formed Electronic Arts. A decade later EA was the world's biggest independent software company with a \$300 million turnover. Time for a new challenge.

The idea behind 3DO was formed after EA's experiences with Nintendo and Sega. Originally EA had concentrated on PCs which, with their vast memories and hard disks, were vastly superior to the archaic technology of Japanese consoles. Unfortunately, it turned out that most people couldn't afford PCs or didn't want to play with machines they spent so much time working on. When EA finally entered the console market they were inevitably enormously successful, but Hawkins still chafed against the outdated technology and the costly licensing agreements demanded by Sega and Nintendo.

The 3DO system is the answer to the question: what if there were a console even more powerful than a PC, one with a fair licensing system and the potential for being upgraded?

WIZARDS

3DO's technology was designed by two of videogaming's hottest talents: RJ Mical and David Needle (see Tech box). They approached Hawkins in 1990 and, within a year, their old friend had formed The 3DO Company. While EA alone lacked the resources to properly promote the hardware, that was never the



The Panasonic FZ-1 was the world's first mass production 3DO system. While its distinctive, stylish black case has come to symbolise 3DO – even being turned into £250,000 mobile display – the machine is just one of a whole range of different 3DO models (see over) and Panasonic have now replaced it with the FZ-10. Nevertheless, they all run the same software and have much the same sockets. Above, you can see the AV expansion slot which M2 will use.

intention anyway. Hawkins wanted the company to devote itself purely to developing the technology, while the actual manufacturing would be taken care of by established electronics companies who'd license the technology like they would for an audio CD player or VHS video recorder. It was an idea which was instantly popular with the giant corporations who know how important standards are for reassuring consumers their machine isn't about to become obsolete.

Besides EA, 3DO won the backing of giant manufacturers such as AT&T, Sanyo and Matsushita (the world's largest electronics group with Panasonic being

one of their many brandnames). It also pulled in the mainstream entertainment business with MCA (the makers of *ET* and *Jurassic Park*) and Time Warner (the world's largest entertainment group). This dream team provided an initial investment of \$300 million, with a further \$50 million raised in a shares issue on Wall Street which saw prices double in a day. It's said EA alone made enough money to fund its 3DO software development for years.

Trip Hawkins' genius was in positioning 3DO at the apex of the coming interactive revolution. Hollywood saw the possibility of interactive movies which could

3DO System Technical Specifications

CPU: 32bit RISC processor ARM60 (12.5MHz)
Custom Chips: Twin graphics animation engines
Direct Memory Access engine (50MB/sec)
16bit custom DSP (audio)
Memory: 3MB (2MB DRAM, 1MB VRAM)
1MB ROM
Save Game Facility: 32Kb NVRAM.
Video Output: Composite video, S-Video, RF Video
Screen Resolution: 768x576 pixels

Colours: 16.7 million maximum, 32,000 standard.
Audio: Stereo 16bit PCM (sampling 44.1kHz)
Storage: Double-speed CD-ROM Drive
Control ports: One low-speed, Dsub-p pin port.
Additional ports on joypads allow for daisy-chaining up to eight joypads.
Expansion Port: One high speed I/O: 30 pin x 1.
AV Expansion Port: High speed AV-I/O (MPEG VideoCD adaptor): 68 pin x 1

HARDCORE TECHNO

While The 3DO Company was only established in September 1991, the men behind its technology are responsible for the world's first multimedia home computer and the most advanced handheld console ever.

RJ Mical and Dave Needle have been labelled the 'Rogers and Hammerstein' of videogaming, characters as colourful and influential as any in the world of entertainment. They met ten years ago at one of Silicon Valley's hottest start-ups. Mical was head of software development, while Needle was the hotshot tech-head who started as cleaner (to teach him some humility) and ended up senior hardware architect.

In 1985 their reputation was made with a revolutionary computer. At a time when most computers were silent, monochromatic monsters the Amiga A1000 was simply unbelievable. It had custom chips for full colour graphics and stereo sound, plus a multitasking operating system which has yet to be equalled by either the PC or Macintosh. The Amiga was a multimedia computer before the term had been invented. Besides still being a hugely popular home computer in Europe, souped up Amigas are at the core of Hollywood special effects work for shows like *DSV SeaQuest* and *Babylon 5*.

However, judged by the Amiga's potential this is almost a failure. World-beating ambitions were sadly lost when the Amiga Company was taken over by Commodore, a company which lacked the resources to properly promote it. Needle and Mical left a year after its launch, Needle freelancing on Amiga software applications while Needle joined Apple. But in 1987 they were brought back together by David Morse, ex-president of the Amiga Company. Over lunch Morse watched as Mical and Needle designed a radical new console. Built into the hardware were arcade-style features such as sprite rotation and zooming. The system also supported linking up to eight machines for multi-player games – not bad for a handheld! Originally called the Handy, it was bought up by Atari and renamed the Lynx. Seven years later it's still the most powerful handheld on the market, but again Atari lacked the resources to exploit it.

NTG

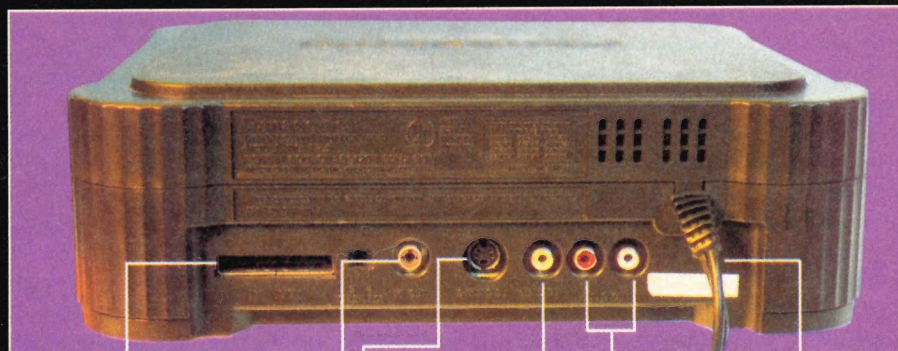
Mical and Needle left the Lynx project in 1989 and once more ended up in a restaurant having lunch with David Morse. This time the sketch on a napkin was the 3DO system and Morse instantly set up the New Technologies Group to foster it. NTG was the nucleus around which the 3DO Company was formed. Morse was determined this technology would get the backing it deserved. Trip Hawkins was first on board, and giant multinationals such as Matsushita soon followed. This time Mical and Needle had world class support like no other console in history.

While Hawkins had the marketing savvy and the idea about making 3DO technology a world standard, the guts of 3DO's appeal lay in that napkin sketch and the history of its designers. One of the strongest advantages of Mical and Needle is that it's a partnership of the two sides of a computer. While everyone understands the importance of hardware, the software which links it together is often forgotten. Most machines begin with the hardware, then wrap the operating system (OS) around it. Mical and Needle work on

both simultaneously, tweaking each other's designs to ensure the best possible synthesis. Most consoles have at best a rudimentary OS, the programmers writing directly to the hardware. This is technically efficient, but means that if you upgrade the hardware all the old games will become incompatible. By contrast 3DO was designed to be future-proof and all software has to use the OS. This means the hardware can easily be upgraded.

Another reason why the 3DO is future-proof is the actual hardware. Unlike the ancient mess of standards which make up a PC, the 3DO is a very open, clean design. The motherboard boasts a full 32bit databus with full width expansions allowing any upgrade full access to the hardware. It also has a high speed Direct Memory Access engine. This enables the

against a bluescreen just like a Hollywood movie. Once such a graphic has been digitised as cell, the graphic engines and OS provide a wide range of custom effects. Tricks such as the warping of a bouncing ball, the transparency of fog, varying lighting effects and texture mapping are all handled automatically. While a conventional system can produce these effects, the programmer would have to write the code for them and the CPU painstakingly put them into effect. For the 3DO system these effects are simply called up by accessing the OS. Texture mapping is a particularly impressive effect. For example, a programmer could input a rough, volcanic surface and the 3DO system would automatically wrap this around a wireframe landscape or sprite. The stunning detail and speed of games like *Road Rash* and *Total Eclipse*



Expansion Port

RF Output
SVHS Output

Composite
Video Output

Right/Left
Audio Output

AC Power Cord

various custom chips to read data from the memory chips without using the central processor unit (CPU). At normal speed up to 6MB of data can be moved per second, but there's also a Sport DMA mode which ups this to no less than 50MB a second. This sort of high-speed data handling is perfect for multimedia applications and a key part of the Cinepak video compression.

On top of this very open, high-speed architecture there's some powerful processors. The heart of the system is the 32bit ARM60 CPU. This uses RISC technology which is a relatively new approach. Unlike a standard PC CPU, a RISC chip is a lot less complex and uses a Reduced Instruction Set Construction. While this means less built-in functions, in operation a RISC chip runs a great deal faster with more complex instructions being quickly built up out of the simpler ones. So although the ARM60 only runs at 12.5MHz, it's effectively equivalent to a much faster 486. Also, while any PC CPU has electronics dating back from its original 1985 design, the ARM60 is completely uninhibited by such requirements.

The ARM60 alone would be able to give a PC tough competition, but in fact many of the 3DO system's most impressive tricks never even enter the CPU. Instead Mical and Needle designed two new processors, a pair of animation engines capable of manipulating 64 million pixels per second – as compared to 1 million for a conventional 16bit system and 3 million for a 32bit one. Inspired by the example of traditional Hollywood animation techniques, these chips organise graphics into high-resolution 'animation cells'.

When Mical and Needle first began developing the hardware in Mical's workshop, they filmed a model plane

is the perfect demonstration of the system's power.

The Hollywood effect also comes to the fore with digital video. Like other machines the 3DO system can be upgraded to play VideoCD movies via an upgrade cartridge. However, for most games the 3DO Multiplayer can deliver FMV clips which are little less effective just through the system's sheer power. Due to the double-speed CD-ROM drive and high-speed graphics processing the 3DO system can handle full-screen, full-frame video at 30 frames per second.

As for sound, of course the 3DO system can spool music and sound effects at will off the CD. But it also has its own sound generator, a high-speed Digital Signal Processor (DSP) which is capable of CD quality music. It also boasts a proprietary technique called 3D Audio Imaging which means if you listen with headphones, sounds come not just from the left and right but forward and backward too. Try it some time!

The CD-ROM Drive providing the game data is double-speed, capable of transferring 300k per second. The storage potential of a CD is unbelievable, at 650MB it's about 225 times bigger than your average 8Megabit cartridge. And when it's time to finally leave a game for the night, the 3DO unit has 32K of NVRAM to store numerous save games.

In short, the 3DO system is unimaginably more powerful than any previous, 16bit console and, just as importantly, is designed so that can be continually updated. The existing hardware is currently enjoying a wave of third generation titles, such as *Space Hulk*, *BattleSport* etc., which illustrate the immense power of this revolutionary system. The combination of the 3DO multiplayer's processing and CD storage has made possible games which hadn't even been dreamt of before.

earn more than the films themselves. America's vast cable TV network saw the potential for a powerful set-top interface with US West is now using 3DO hardware for the world's largest interactive TV test. AT&T announced a modem so gamers could play and talk with each other over the phone lines. Everyone wanted a piece of 3DO technology and it's no coincidence that both MCA and Time-Warner set about establishing formidable games divisions. As the hype spread, movie mogul Strauss Zelnick left Fox to head 3DO supporters Crystal Dynamics.

HARD TRUTHS

3DO's October 1993 American launch surprised many who believed the original hardware could never meet its deadline. The fact that it did was a powerful demonstration of 3DO's development work, and its partners' manufacturing muscle. Unfortunately, there was little sign of its 500+ software licensees and sales were disappointing. It was a hard lesson, but it had equal relevance to 3DO's scoffing competitors. Basically, the more powerful machines become, the longer and more costly it becomes to develop software which properly exploits it. Company insiders describe this as the most difficult time, they knew great games were on the way and were confident about the Japanese launch – but the ribbing from outsiders was relentless. Nevertheless, just ten days before the March 20th launch of the first 3DO system in Japan, Panasonic's FZ-1, GoldStar and Samsung became 3DO partners in order to build their own 3DO units, while Creative Labs joined so it could develop a 3DO card for PCs.

The real success story, however, was on the Japanese high street. Bolstered by a healthy supply of games and Matsushita's excellent retail network, the launch was a roaring success building up to around 100,000 sales by the end of 1994. Japanese software producers, already drenched in cash from 3DO's manufacturers, ensured a fast-growing software base and less than a month later Toshiba became the latest partner with plans for another 3DO Multiplayer, and even a portable unit for in car use. It was this Japanese success the European launch in September '94 skilfully replicated. Great games such as *John Madden* and *Road Rash* had 3DO systems moving better than many software houses expected, their titles often selling out two or three times.

Currently, 3DO faces strong competition. Its headline making share issue was, in many ways, the starting gun for the race to establish next generation system. Nintendo rushed to make a deal with Silicon Graphics over its own console, while Sega turned to

JVC and Hitachi as partners for the Saturn. Sony, traditionally a strong rival of the much larger Matsushita, has the PlayStation, while Atari's ambitious Jaguar hit the market early on to flounder over software support. All these systems have their own advantages and disadvantages, but mainly conform to the standard console approach with the emphasis very much on hardware and closed standards.

The 3DO system, by contrast, is a standard designed to be licensed by anyone and, like a PC or Macintosh, runs a genuine Operating System (OS). The reason why these computers have lasted over for a decade is that programs are written to the OS software rather than the hardware. This allows manufacturers to change the hardware so it can be more cheaply made, upgraded as more powerful chips become available and even reworked for new functions: like set-top boxes for video-on-demand. That's why despite having the first 'superconsole' to be launched, with an ever growing range of great games to prove it, 3DO is still confident of keeping its technological edge. The M2 upgrade due for early '96 is claimed to offer five to seven times the performance of its most powerful competitor – see pages 123-7 for more information on its incredible technology. As long as the Company continues, 3DO systems could be almost infinitely upgraded. For Trip, at least, the future is clear with 3DO on course for entering the English Dictionary: "dominant interactive standard, multiple applications, especially ultra-cool games..." □ ssw

3DO Magazine

Peripherals



Besides a wide-range of third-party joypads, there are plenty of other fun 3DO peripherals. While not cheap at £90, CH Products' 3DO Flightstick is a very desirable piece of kit. It uses sophisticated, analog controls which make flight sims far more responsive. Many games support it, including *Need For Speed* and *Flying Nightmares*. Phone

0121 3274499 for more details.

ALG's GameGun is mainly used by the company's own coin-op conversions and, as yet, they've not supported it with PAL compatible software. There are plans for this to change however.

Two peripherals now unlikely to appear in the UK are the MPEG upgrade and memory expansion units available in Japan. This is because they are actually built into M2, free extras basically, and are thus no longer regarded as necessary.



Tired of the standard FZ-JPIX joypad? Capcom's excellent six button SFII design (left) is available now.



Global 3DO



Above, Panasonic's current 3DO system, the FZ-10, is more cost-effective than the FZ-1.



Above, GoldStar's PAL 3DO system was launched in the UK this Summer and comes bundled with EA's *FIFA Soccer*.



Above, the IMP-21J TRY 3DO system from Sanyo. Sadly, it's only available in Japan.



Above, Panasonic's original FZ-1 3DO system complete with FZ-FV1 MPEG upgrade for VideoCD and a mouse (not yet confirmed for UK release).



GoldStar

3DO HARDWARE & SOFTWARE

a lethal combination

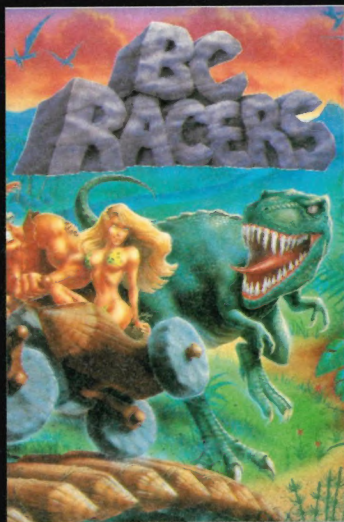
Q. Is your old games system leaving you empty and jaded?

We know what you mean, but with GoldStar's 3DO hardware and software you'll find a lethal combination of game-playing brilliance. Hardware that can also play audio CDs, photo CDs and, most important of all, is expandable to M2 (the amazing 64 BIT system available in 1996 which will handle over 1,000,000 polygons per second). And a whole armoury of existing software titles including these stunning new games.

So if your appetite for games has been jaded by inferior systems, switch to GoldStar 3DO, the system which won't ruin your appetite... for games!!



Unleash the destructive forces of evil for the battle to conquer Urth. In this primal beat-'em-up, freeze breath, snout gouge and power puke your dino opponents to win your Rage bouts. Only one victor will progress to The Final Battle Ground where Primal Rage will be decided.



In this pre-historic wild 'n' wacky bike race, you have to speed 'n' smash your way through thirty-two howlin' heats in a madcap, cartoon race against a hardrock host of rocky racers! Playboy millionaire caveman Millstone Rockafella is arranging a BC bike race. You, Cliff Ace, have your heart set on the prize of the Ultimate Boulderdash Bike and no-one is going to get in your way!



Peace has a price, and you're about to pay it! The success of the weapons division of the Tyron Corporation depends on the threat of war, and when new automated defence systems are proposed, the weapons division plots a mock alien attack to fight off their extinction. In this blend of sci-fi adventure and shoot-'em-up, you have to uncover the plot and escape from the base.



SO FOR SAD GAMES MANUFACTURERS, IT'S...

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LG House, 264 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire SL1 4DT, Tel: (01753) 500400

GAME OVER!

BladeForce

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA Developer: In-house Save Game: 6 SRAM slots Price: £45 Available: Now

After all the hype about PSX, *BladeForce* delivers a timely demonstration of 3DO power with some of the most sumptuous 3D yet seen. Vast cityscapes recreate the feel of a daytime, fog-draped *Bladerunner* – impressive for a leisurely exploration game, gobsmacking for a 26fps arcade blaster.

BladeForce is unsurprisingly built around its environment. You must learn to both navigate your way across its sprawling maze-like regions and how to manoeuvre through the tiniest of gaps for a vital power-up. There are six massive levels outlined in the instructions, with the promise of additional levels when those are completed. Each level is split into four colour-coded zones of increasing difficulty, with the last containing the level's crime lord...

On level one, the boss is secreted within a huge gun turret surrounded, in turn, by yet more turrets. This killing zone is locked within a boxed off maze with yet more turrets, plus tanks and bizarre flying enemies. If you want, you can fly straight there and try your luck. You won't last long...

Far better to spend some time weakening your enemy and strengthening yourself. The power, shields and firing rates of all the enemies are routed through some 18 Sources. Some are out in the open and easily collected. Others are secreted within vast fortresses, buried under high walls with turrets and towers providing interlocking fields of fire.

A head-on attack is not the best approach, which is where Bubba comes in. His control system ranks as one of the game's real gems. Unlike *Shock Wave*, you have full control of your height under a certain ceiling. You can also reverse, or even slide sideways, the latter highly useful within conventional banked turns to keep an enemy in your crosshairs.

All this is critical, because the most basic point about *BladeForce* is movement. Enemies are quick to lock-on and pump out a stream of laserfire. Sliding turns, conventional turns, reverse moves and so on allow you to develop your own attack patterns with guns, short-range homing missiles and, later on, collectible freefall grenades, bombs etc. All of which you'll need for later surprises such as attractors, repellers and jammers.

Learning all this stuff takes time, which is why Studio 3DO have thoughtfully provided a training level complete with huge labels, signs and arrows to make everything clear about the various objects. Rather less welcome, is an autosave which saves your position after each level – including lives. To get

Bite Me! That's the legend scrawled on the hero's mouthpiece. That's the attitude of the developers of *BladeForce*: colossal 3D landscapes, massed gun emplacements, a sky full of attack drones. All at 30 fps or more.

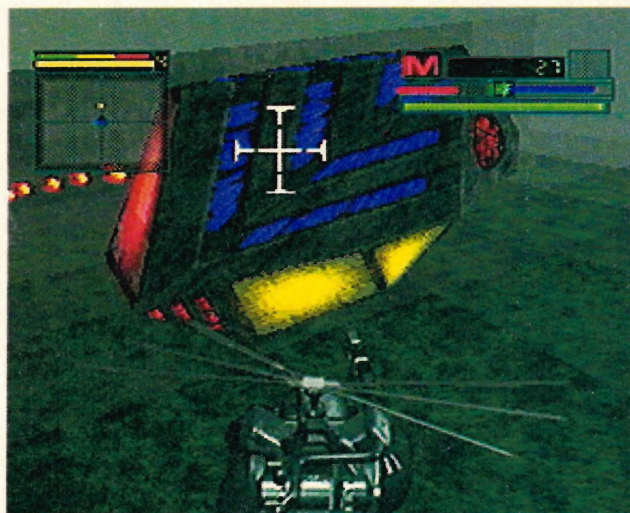
through the whole game, you'll need to complete each level in some style.

One of the strongest factors pulling you back to the game is the soundtrack. All you have is various weapons, explosions and warning FX laid over looped rock guitar audio. Simplistic, but just about perfect for a blaster. *BladeForce* has plenty of exploration and the grungy rock soundtrack keeps the 'intense' feel even when you're wandering over an already blasted zone.

If you bizarrely don't like rock, the interface lets you mix the music down low and the FX up, not to mention altering the head-up-display and the control buttons. The game is compatible with a Flightstick Pro, but with practice a joypad is just as good.

Even so, *BladeForce* will certainly not appeal to everyone. Its sheer scale mean those who prefer their action carved in short sections and get lost going to the local shops won't like it. This is a very big, very tough game with each level taking about an hour of tactical exploration and intensive blasting. If you're prepared to put in the work, *BladeForce* will reward you with a substantial and often quite dazzling challenge. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Above, huge flying enemies are a superb demonstration of 3DO's power – and tough to shoot down. Below, a dozen exquisitely detailed drones spin about protecting various power-ups and enemy Sources.



Below, level two's emerald islands give it a distinctive, otherworld look.



Killing Time

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA Developer: In-house Save Game: 6 SRAM slots Price: £45 Available: Now

While you arrive on the Conway's island retreat in search of a mystical water clock, Tess Conway soon becomes an obsession. The spirits of her friends, her enemies and employees frequently materialise before you. These aren't conventional sprites, but superimposed FMV footage of real actors. Occasionally they speak to you, other times, all you get is a brief snippet of conversation, a party joke or a hint at a conspiracy in planning.

The mansion is also occupied by a zombies. Like the FMV ghosts, most are portrayed by real people in elaborate make-up effects. While they still bitmap at extreme close-up, mostly they stay at mid-distance where the effect is stunning. *Doom's* blocky monsters have never looked quite so basic as when compared to *Killing Time*.

While gameplay recalls *Doom*, it's far more realistically presented. The mansion, for example, isn't split up into levels but provides a single huge playing area organised into ballrooms, lounges and so forth. Long corridors between rooms allow different graphics to be streamed off the CD without ever breaking the realistic atmosphere. Similarly, game items such as keys are cleverly woven into the narrative. One early 'key' is disguised as an RSVP invitation, which appears besides the body of shot hunter.

Also furthering the sense of atmosphere is a top soundtrack. Wandering around outside the mansion, crystal clear birdsong makes you wonder if some one's left a window open in the office. The music is equally impressive, mystery pieces and period tunes that would do justice to a movie. Then, of course, there's the voices of the actors – Tess's throaty "Help me!" being both spooky and sexy. Dolby Surround Sound isn't used, but stereo is very effective and you often instinctively turn

Produced by ex-ILM employee JuliAnn Appler, *Killing Time* is an ambitious combination of rapid-fire action and spooky adventuring, all wrapped up with true Hollywood production values.

to meet a new foe.

Killing Time's success in atmosphere and realism does, however, come with a price. The huge, multi-level killing fields of *Doom* are pretty much absent, there's plenty of frantic action, but *Doom's* insane intensity is only rarely imitated. Too much of the game relies on huge mazes which, thanks to an excellent automap, are mainly challenging through rapid-fire reactions when you stumble into massed gangsters.

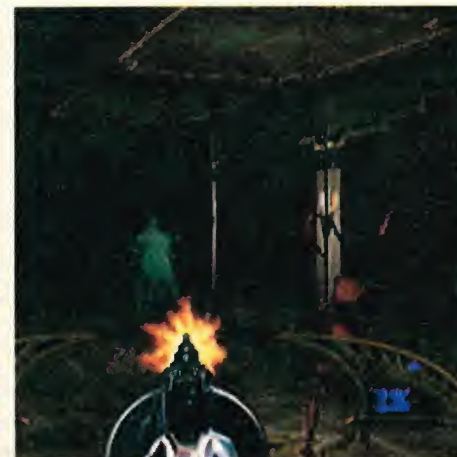
Overall, *Killing Time* is a mixed bag. Players expecting the mania of *Doom* will probably be disappointed. On the other hand, the game

does provide an ambitious new game-style. In its plot, its realistic sets, the digitised and superimposed FMV supporting characters, *Killing Time* acquires many of the best features of movies without suffering the penalties of a linear plot.

It's a pity there wasn't more adventuring than sub-*Doom* blasting and irk-some mazes, but as an action-mystery-adventure it's spine chilling fun as it is – and a mouth-watering pointer to the future. □ *ssw*

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Cigarette-smoking skeletons, clowns, huge bugs and matrons are just some of the enemies on offer in *Killing Time*. Fortunately, ghostly spirits, middle right, provide useful advice. But, as ever, a trusty trigger finger and loads of ammo is the only way to win through.



Space Hulk

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Key Game **Save Game:** Yes **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

One of the most fun things about *Space Hulk* is showing it to fans of *PC Doom*. First their jaw drops at the graphics: the lush colours and fine detail, the way enemies explode under fire, body parts slopping onto the floor while blood permanently stains the walls. They gasp at the way Genestealers scale into hi-res monsters which engage you in hand-to-claw combat. Then there's the background hum, your thumping heartbeat, the crackling radio chatter and constant, hammering gunfire. The *Doom* fans watch and they drool. Then they snatch the joypad off you and promise to show you how the game should really be played. Then they die. And they die again. Then some more. Finally, they throw down the joypad and storm off.

Play *Space Hulk* like a shotgun wielding *Doom* psycho and you'll have your lungs handed to you double-quick. The enemies are too smart, too numerous and too ferocious. *Space Hulk* is built around an intricate tactical combat engine, with the graphics grafted on later. Think of it like this. You're in an exceptionally claustrophobic environment being stalked by an apparently endless stream of Genestealers. They're no Einsteins, but they know enough to hang back if alone, pinning you down until reinforcements arrive for human-wave-style attacks. To survive against this merciless onslaught you need to deploy your squad intelligently, moving through the various maze-like levels with Terminators covering each other.

Controlling your troopers is done by a beautifully drawn, blue translucent display. Call it up and you can flick between soldiers, setting up to five waypoints for each. You can even tell them to open/shut doors, watch your back, observe certain areas and pick up or drop items. Initially when you access the map, everything goes into Freeze Time – but this respite is strictly limited and soon runs out. You can still use the map, but the action resumes with Freeze Time slowly building up again. It's a brilliant device which allows for tactical thinking, without losing arcade-style pace – with so much to do, Freeze Time can be more frantic than in-game time.

Mission objectives are exceptionally varied. Troops must be rescued, sacred relics recovered, some rooms must be flamed or bombed, others must be stormed and yet more held against relentless attack. The most chilling missions simply ask that you survive for five minutes. As your precious defences are ripped to shreds – 'Pluvius is down! Pluvius is down!' – seconds seem to last an eternity. Each mission is a unique tactical challenge: fast reactions are

20 Millennia after the first cathedral-like starship carried forth humanity from its home planet, the Imperium is constantly at war. Imperial planet Devlar III is under threat of apocalypse unless the Blood Angels, an illustrious chapter of the Imperial Space Marines, can cleanse an alien-infested space hulk...

fine, but without brains you're dead...

Unfortunately, the dramatic new visuals and atmospheric audio make cold calculation particularly difficult. As you hear the cries of fallen Terminators, while yet more Genestealers mass to attack, coolly worked out tactics tend to dissolve. Forget the plan, let's just move your instincts scream and that, of course, is invariably fatal. The enemy pour through the smallest opening, taking out half a dozen men in a second.

To avoid frustration at getting stuck on a single level, *Space Hulk* is split into two sections. The first allows you to play legendary missions – some new, some from the original PC game and some from the boardgame, plus four training missions. You can play these in any order you like and take over any

Terminator at any time. The second section is the campaign game, the 'real thing' which puts you aboard the space hulk – initially as a lowly grunt taking orders. As you progress, you earn the right to command. As this is real, however, dead

Terminators don't come back and you can't take over another Terminator. If you die, it's game over. There are over 60 missions in all and that's a big challenge which, even if you complete it, still retains appeal with the objective of getting maximum points on individual missions.

While the basic game is a superb in its own right, developers Key Game have embroidered it with other Warhammer imaginings. Besides the Genestealers, there are two types of magical creatures – Magi and Patriarchs – which fight with spells.



Pluvius is down! Fail to parry a GeneStealer's attacks and a claw will punch through your face-mask in a milli-second. The extraordinary hi-res detail of the Genestealers' is just one of the game's many brilliant innovations.

Having a magi materialise before you and listen to his curses echo around the corridors, before flames erupt all around you is quite unnerving. Hybrids are Genestealers redux, smaller claws but faster, smarter and armed. Watching a Hybrid nip through a door, loose off a shot and then take cover is quite amusing... until you die, of course. Then there's rebel Terminators, heavily armoured with major firepower and smarts. None of these creatures have the Genestealer's close-up graphics, but as they naturally tend to attack from a distance it doesn't really matter.

The game also boasts eight different landscapes, from iced up corridors to *Star Trek* hi-tech to weird, book-lined environments which look like something from *Name Of The Rose*. These medieval graphics perhaps best illustrate the strength of the game's scenario. While gameplay is as exciting as anything in *Aliens*, the storyline far outdoes most Hollywood offerings. The sheer depth of the Warhammer universe imbues the game with a weight and sense of depth which is quite stunning. When you've flung down the joypad for the umpteenth time, you can pick up the manual or rewatch the lengthy intro one more time. It's a game which crawls into your head

Highly
Recommended
3DO
Magazine



Above, a Genestealer trades razor-clawed blows with your parrying defences. A Patriarch, left, prepares a spell, whilst a robot defends you top right. Hybrids, right, are smart, fast and well-armed. Below your troops stand guard. Watching them walk about, automatically firing to defend themselves, is fantastic.



Rebel Chaos Marines, above, are fearsome opponents. Fortunately, your own side has some pretty heavy firepower too, below.



While one trooper marches off into the fog, others stand guard armed only with axes and shield.



The bloody remains of Genestealers give a useful guide to your route so far. You'll also find bits of marine armour too, sadly...

even as it jangles your nerves.

To sum up, this certainly isn't an easy game and, even more than *Need For Speed*, isn't instantly addictive. Some people will hate it. But for those who yearn for something more than arcade simplicity, this is a dream – or perhaps more properly, a fantastically dark nightmare come true. A majestic, magnificent and uniquely British product, *Space Hulk* is a truly epic product. As a standard-bearer for third generation 3DO software, its combination of superb presentation, utterly frantic action and, above all, in-depth gameplay shreds anything yet seen on competitor platforms. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



BattleSport

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA **Developer:** Cyclone Studios **Save Game:** 3 SRAM slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

As promised by Cyclone, *BattleSport* has had a radical reworking since the preview version we raved over in 3DO•5.

At that stage, the basics of the game were in full working order, and *BattleSport* was a furiously compelling *BallBlazer* riff, with simplistic arenas but enough rapid-fire action to be the best two player action around. The finished version boasts masses of superbly detailed texture maps, floating scoreboards, Cyclone billboards and ground details to increase the sense of (high) speed. Even more importantly, it has been crammed with zillions of extra features that make it even more furiously addictive.

Perhaps the most important difference is the increased architecture of the many arenas. Whilst early ones are still fairly barren, get further into the game and you'll find most are crammed with speed humps, small towers and ramps – it becomes pretty much impossible to mindlessly speed across the play area. Initially this is disappointing, as play seems significantly slower, but a number of advantages soon became apparent. Firstly, it's now possible to hide. Sure, your opponent's scanner can pinpoint you, but if you're hoarding the ball or just desperate for respite, dark, cluttered corners can be navigated to provide refuge. Also, the increased clutter of the levels has made the 'jump' feature much more important to success. You can retain full speed whizzing around the play area if you accurately jump obstacles, but this takes a lot of practice if you're to get to grips with the characteristics of each tank available. Faster, lighter tanks obviously have an advantage over fat, slowboat warships.

More than ever, *BattleSport* is now a game demanding serious tactics. The range of ability between the many tanks available (supertanks can be bought later on) is much greater, and the most immediate decision to make is whether to be fast and weak or slow and apocalyptic. Then it's power ups. As well as an initial bundle of dosh, more money can be collected on each level to buy upgrades and special weapons. These range from predictable speed-ups and double damage weapons, to ECM jammers, advanced targeting systems (such as homing missiles), decoy goals to fool your opponent, fumble protection locks to make your ship 'hold' the ball more firmly... there's so many it's initially frustrating that you can't afford them all, but you soon learn which are entertaining novelty weapons and which will radically assist your own, individual style of play.

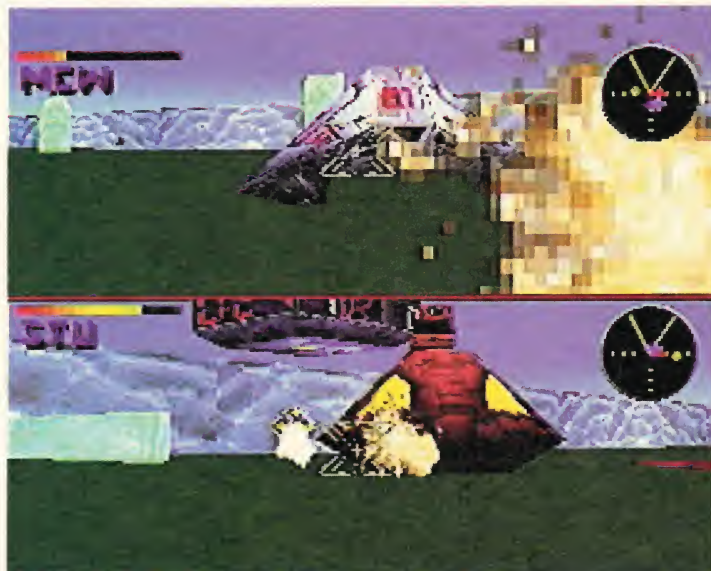
Another, optional new feature on many levels is a 'Shot Clock' – a time limit on how long you can hold onto the ball before shooting. This accelerates the

Pre-production copies of *BattleSport* have been wowing gamers across the world for months, earning excited reactions at 3DO road shows. Now the game is finally here, and Cyclone have lived up to the clamour of expectation with a blistering game guaranteed to impress and seduce for a long time to come...

excitement, as it makes 'goal keeping' duties for the opponent much more important. It's essential to get to the goal and defend, hoping either to clip the attacker and blast the ball loose, or, ideally, catch the ball yourself. If you've got an invisibility power-up, this glorious scenario is even more attainable, and if pulled off in the two-player game, it's difficult to avoid punch ups

when you've stolen and scored in a flash! However, since some levels feature cubed goals with four entry points, defending can be miserably difficult, and the ultimate humiliation has to be defending a decoy goal. It's a good job those 3DO pads have such long leads...

If you can't pull off a shot in the 30 second time limit, the ball is thrown back across the arena, and it's off on the hunt again. At first, both players rush madly after it, getting in each other's way and blasting chunks out of each other, but wiser strategies soon become apparent. You could stalk the other tank to the ball, before blasting it in the rear and retrieving the prize yourself, hopefully scoring in the two second period the other player is immobilised for (which increases with each death). A slower, heavily armoured ship may decide to hide near the goal, keeping an eye on the scanner for the enemy's cautious attack, then sidle out, guns blasting for a quick kill. Less well armoured ships must take every opportunity to weaken the enemy gradually, so that at the crucial face-off, a quick flurry of shots will eliminate the weaponry advantage of the bigger foe.



All out, face to face blasting. Neither player has the ball, but both are killing time by killing each other. Watching your opponent explode into chunks of metal is intensely satisfying, giving you a few free seconds without hassle.

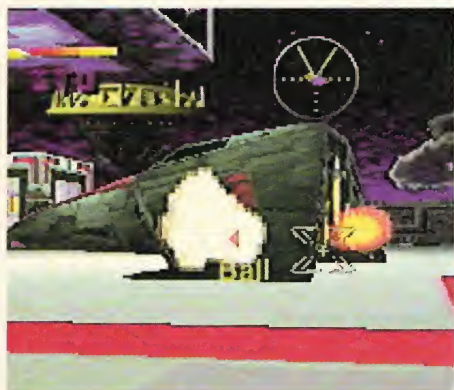
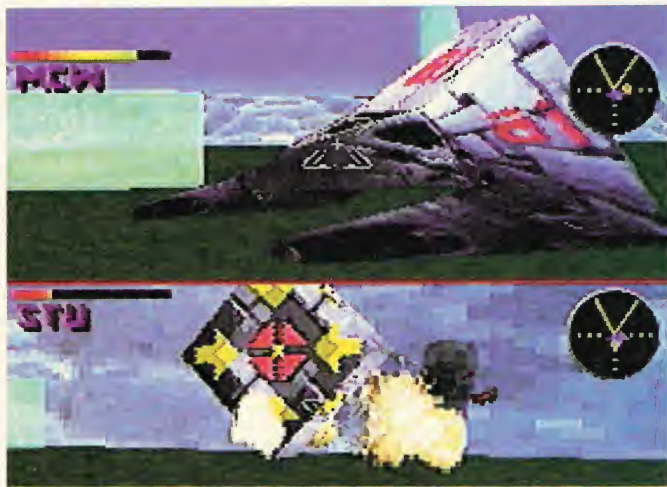
And obviously, faster lighter ships can jump and speed out of trouble a lot easier, frantically scouring the arena for power-ups to redress the balance.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect to master is scoring itself. If you're dead still, with the goal ahead, success is guaranteed, but since most goal attempts are frenzied, high speed attacks delivered whilst being fired upon or barged, it's essential to learn the physics of the game. The direction the ball shoots in is determined by the speed and angle of your ship. If you attack the goal with a wide, fast semi-circle, the ball will veer off on the same trajectory as your craft, wrapping around past the goal and back into play. Approach at an angle without taking account of aftertouch on your shot (by pressing on the directional pad) and again, the ball will rocket wide of the mark. Whilst initially, this can make for long, or low scoring matches (bouts can be time or goal based in length), it's the player who learns the sensitive physics of ball control in *BattleSport* that will emerge as the victor.

The one player tournament mode offers a massive challenge, with ten opponents (plus a few secret

Highly Recommended
3DO Magazine
Recommendation

Right, the superb intro hints at what the M2 sequel could look like. Below, the top ship gets a lock on his opponent who's just missed a shot on a fixed, single-sided goal. The silver Runner is lightly armed and armoured but with great turn of speed. Note the semi-transparent barriers on this ice level.



Above, a Sliver takes a direct hit. Note the glow of its engines which can be an invaluable giveaway if an enemy has activated its invisibility cloak. Below, a Spitfire is about to disintegrate.



Above, the Hunter is the best all-rounder. Here it's airborne, with orange ball safely collected (ten seconds left on the shot clock!) and four-sided goal and score-board just behind. Left, the heavy Stinger is blown into texture-mapped debris.



ones), 50 odd arenas (plus plenty of secret ones) and comprehensive saved player stats. The different attack styles of the computer opponents is incredible, each with their own personality and tactical approach. Later ones are unbelievably ferocious, but it's the two-player mode that offers the most fun with a level of intimate violence and interaction that's unparalleled in videogaming.

In short, *BattleSport* is a game that demands attention and rewards with the most essential two-

player game on any system around. There's just so much fun to be had, it's impossible to turn the thing off, and since there's always a loser, no-one's going to stop playing when they've just been blasted to bits and lost 5-1. Grudge matches are the only kind of games played after a while, believe me. Get this game and get real, then dream of the M2 sequel... □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Shipping
Summer 1995

Panasonic®

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Super Wing Commander

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Origin **Save Game:** 8 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

The reason *Wing Commander* caused such a stir in 1991 was the way it skillfully interweaved presentation and gameplay to provide a truly cinematic game. Rather than interspersing its 72 missions with a handful of static reward screens, Chris Roberts developed a plot which went through the entire game. The intro sequence kicks off a plot which has you coming aboard the Tiger Claw carrier as a rookie. Your first mission is to uncover what happened in the intro sequence and, as the game progresses, your performance affects how the story develops. Do poorly and the Federation's campaign becomes ever more hopeless, leading ultimately to a Kilrathi victory.

While most games begin with you plonked in your spaceship's cockpit, *Wing Commander* begins in the Tiger Claw's Rec Room. Here you can chat with various characters, learning combat tips, hints about upcoming plot surprises and maybe even begin a romance. If you fancy a different sort of action, a practice mode is wittily incorporated as an arcade machine. Basically, the Rec Room provides the human dimension of the story, the faces to the various wingmen you'll fly with and a gloss on their characters – important since in the heat of battle the way they behave varies dramatically.

The Briefing Room, by contrast, provides the tactical story with plenty of detail on your upcoming missions. When that's over the pilots are shown running

Originally released in 1991, Chris Robert's epic space opera pointed the way forward for the coming multimedia revolution. Massively upgraded for the 3DO, it's still as addictive as ever.

to their ships. Unlike the original PC game with its 1944-style decor, the 3DO version glistens with hi-tech FMV sequences. The sequence which has you combat-suited, running to your ship and then blasting off really does get the adrenaline pumping.

Once on a mission the game becomes more conventional. The missions aren't massively varied, breaking down into either escort or patrols. As you'd expect, combat involves lots of frantic manoeuvring to get the enemy into your sights, but what sets it apart is the detail.

Not only can you give your wingman commands, but you can exchange insults with the Kilrathi. The digitised speech really comes into its own here, Kilrathi taunts such as 'Does it hurt ape-child' add immensely to the atmosphere.

The actual graphics are generally excellent. The 3DO system's hardware was designed for exactly the same 'scale and rotate' school of sprite handling as the original *Wing Commander* used. The new sprites are consequently far more detailed and look gorgeous. One particularly stunning effect is when an enemy ship dissolves into debris, one large chunk flashing with electricity just like in *Star Trek III*. It's a shame then that there is some jerkiness, but this is first generation of software for the 3DO system from Origin and generally everything moves very quickly and effectively.

Combat certainly feels realistically hectic. Enemy ships whirl about desperately jockeying for position, your wingman invariably flies into your line of fire and loudly protests over the radio while



A Krant, top, comes into range of your mass drivers. The detail is brilliant, but don't admire it too much. Below, the Tiger Claw rec room.



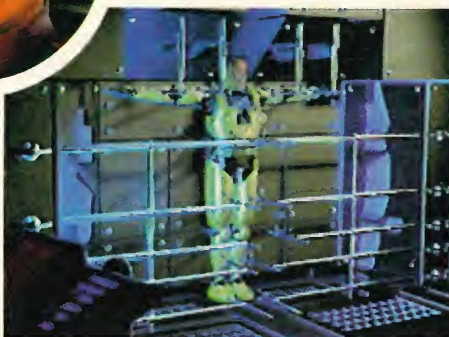
your instrument panels flash red, then explode under enemy fire. Your various weapons all look great, laser bolts sparkling quite cinematically while the excellent sound effects could well have been sampled out of *Star Wars*.

As you complete more missions, you go up in rank and get to fly better ships with a wider choice of weapons. Tactics become more important and despite its toughness, the developing storyline makes leaving the game alone impossible. Even when you complete it, there's always the temptation to return as every failed mission takes the game on a different course, bringing different missions to fly. In this and much else, the gameplay of *Wing Commander* helps see off superficially flashier games. While it's a great at setting the scene for *Wing Commander III*, its toughness means the sequel is ironically a better start for newcomers. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Captain Jeanette Devereaux, inset, provides the game's romantic interest.



Wing Commander III

The Heart Of The Tiger

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Origin **Save Game:** 5 SRAM slots **Price:** £49.99 **Available:** Now

An army of people worked on the 3DO version and it's not hard to see why. Origin have totally rewritten the game for 3DO and substantially enhanced it in the process.

The 3DO system's custom chips easily handle superbly detailed, 16bit colour texture maps (a 65,536 palette rather than the PC's 256). This allows for the 3D to be slightly simplified, so gameplay runs more smoothly with a 20 frames per second average compared to a Pentium 60's 12-15 fps. In short, the games moves faster while looking brighter and more colourful.

The 3DO's superiority is even more evident elsewhere with full Dolby surround sound. Carefully judged ambient noise really pulls you in, even in conventional stereo. The whoosh of opening doors and echoing PA announcements adds immensely to the atmosphere. This carries over to in-game action, the sound of enemy fighters tracking around behind you via Origin's custom sound routines.

Even more impressive is the FMV which is near TV-quality. This is especially important because, of

The Wing Commander series has always been a flagship for PC CD-ROM gaming. Until recently, no other format had the storage capacity, the raw processing muscle or the RAM to really handle the series. And the latest, \$5 million instalment is by far the most technically advanced yet. So can the endlessly delayed 3DO conversion really surpass its progenitor?

course, so much of the game's appeal rests with the Hollywood ambitions of its creators. Besides Mark Hamill as your own, rather grizzled alter ego Colonel Blair, there's Malcolm MacDowell as the secretive Commander Tolwyn and Ginger Lynn Allen as an unusually sexy flight mechanic.

Unlike *Shock Wave*, the actors aren't simply confined to routine reward sequences. If you choose, you can ignore your fellow crew and simply use the FMV for mission briefings, but that's not very sociable is it? Why not take the lift up to the rec room where you can catch the latest news? Or alternatively go stargazing in the gunnery room before visiting the barracks where a comprehensive save option is available. In all these locations, there's a good chance you'll bump into a fellow crew member. Radio operator Rollins provides gloomy gossip on the real state of the war, while



Above, a Kilrathi destroyer explodes, but Col Blair knows the war is going badly (left). Angel (bottom), faces a fate worse than death as a Kilrathi Emperor bays for blood. But is General Tolwyn any more sane?

pilots offer tactical advice – although judging their character is no less important when you have to choose a wingman for a vital mission. Often, characters' speeches will pause for you to make a response which can affect how they react to you from then on and, crucially, ship morale.

The actors provide a very human gloss on the mechanics of gameplay. They give success or failure a personal touch, especially when you're out there dogfighting and a favoured (or hated) wingman begs for help under Kilrathi attack. This is emotional side is underlined by some particularly good acting performances. Mark Hamill may be a touch wooden but his gravelly voice is superb, while Jason Bernard plays Commander Eisen with impressive gravity. His scolding when you mess up a mission really can make you wince.

Of course, the main attraction is the development of the overall story arc. The game begins in the lair of the tiger, with the fiendish Kilrathi disintegrating some human prisoners. There's only one exception: Angel Deveraux, Blair's lover and the only warrior to so impress the Kilrathi they decide to spare her – for now.





Left, the glow of an enemy's shields when hit with lasers is a superb effect.



The Rec Room is a good place to meet your fellow crew members. Fortunately for them, docking with the Victory is automatic rather than manual (above again).



The rest of the intro details Blair's assignment to the crumbling wreck of the VCS Victory, while Angel's fate is mysteriously subject to official secrecy from Tolwyn. The orchestral score rises to a suitable crescendo as Blair's shuttle comes into land on the Victory, and it really does feel as if you've stepped into a sci-fi soap opera.

Yet for all the state-of-the-art, Hollywood FMV, *Wing Commander III* is still very much a game. When the screen flicks into the cockpit after panning across your fighter's launch, well then it's all up to you. Push your joypad left and you see the joystick lean over while the stars whip past. A keyboard's worth of elaborate commands, such as chaff and communication with the enemy, is crammed onto the joypad via various shift button functions. This is a game which takes itself very seriously indeed.

At its heart *Wing Commander III* is essentially

an evolution of all that's gone before with a familiar mix of escort, patrol and search & destroy missions – all located in very deep space. The difference is in the narrative richness of the storyline and, of course, the graphics. While *3DO Wing Commander* featured highly

impressive sprites, with 3D graphics, you can view a ship from any angle. When a wingman suddenly flies overhead, it's always a slightly different perspective. The 3D is particularly awesome when the big ships get involved.

Dogfights where you manoeuvre around a huge freighter with lasers spitting between it and circling enemy fighters is mind-blowing. At extreme close-up, the textures can bitmap, but for most of the time you really do feel like you're in a Star Wars

movie.

If want a war in space, then basically you've got one. Besides mastering the complex controls, you need to think about the game in 3D terms. The combat manoeuvres detailed in the manual really do work and it's good idea to learn them! Although the difficulty level seems better judged than the first, legendarily tough *3DO Wing Commander*, getting through all four discs will require real fighter pilot skills.

Overall, *Wing Commander III* is undoubtedly one of the year's most impressive releases. If you fancy a leading role in the biggest sci-fi epic in the history of videogames, get your order in now. This is the real future of 'interactive movies', and prospective Luke Skywalkers need look no further for a spectacular test of their Jedi training. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Highly Recommended
3DO
Magazine

Shock Wave

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 Developer: ATG Save Game: 10 SRAM Slots Price: £39.99 Available: Now

The image of an arrowheaded F177 arcing over the Earth was always one of the most striking images in the 3DO system's hype. Cynics could argue it was only presentation, but with the 3DO multiplayer that's part of the point. A doublespeed CD as standard, Cinepak video compression and a superfast bus make FMV presentation easy. Almost every game for the 3DO system has some sort of Silicon Graphics wizardry to introduce itself with and, as the machine matures, the eye-candy will be ever more tightly integrated into the actual game.

Shock Wave is at the crest of this wave. Of course, the intro is slick with some of the sharpest CGI imagery around. Moreover the use of real actors, with chroma-key photography to integrate them into CGI sets, is a world away from *Super Wing Commander's* computer art. However, the FMV doesn't stop with the launch of the F177. As you skim across the texture-mapped waves of the River Nile, fellow pilots appear on the instrument panel to urge you on. The female flight controller radios sarcastic comments, while the alien invasion storyline is advanced by news broadcasts. If you complete the mission, a new FMV sequence updates you on alien progress and suggests new tactics. You can't help but feel involved as the pilots trade quips about the upcoming missions.

The game itself is split into ten missions, each of

Shock Wave raises the art of FMV presentation to new heights with real actors seamlessly blended into CGI action sequences. But does the game live up to the movie?

which takes place on a different location on Earth. Within a fairly broad corridor you have complete freedom of movement except for your altitude, which is fixed. At the end of the corridor is an end level guardian, but there's plenty of alien-infested stages before you get there. On the early levels aliens are slow-moving and simple-minded, but as you progress new types arrive with tougher armour and smarter tactics. It's a good idea to listen during those FMV briefings!

In-game visuals are just as impressive as the FMV. Texture mapping is used on just about everything except your laser bolts. Alien ships have a truly otherworldly look about them, while locations such as Las Vegas are evocatively portrayed with streams of light shimmering in the dark. The graphics are, as you expect, fully interactive. Hit a skyscraper and a nice explosion consumes masses of points.

For shoot-'em-up fanatics *Shock Wave* offers plenty of fast 'n' frantic action with a better graded



difficulty curve than *Total Eclipse*: better still it has a save game option. It also boasts superb Dolby Surround Sound which brilliantly tracks the circling enemies. The FMV movie has fantastic production values, however it's fixed plot is less compelling than *Wing Commander's* interactive narrative.

The main problem, however, is that while *Shock Wave* is fun to play it doesn't have massive depth. The F177 has a simple array of weapons and combat's rarely all that complex. Worse, because there's only ten levels they're made very long and protracted. Going back to base for a hospital scene, then restarting on the easy early stages can become tiresome. If you're the persistent type, however, later levels provide plenty of graphic variety and the occasional escort mission adds spice to gameplay. If you want a blast, *Shock Wave* is both slick and very challenging. If you want more, then the much anticipated sequel promises some very exciting improvements. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



Above, acting tough. The excellent FMV sequences really do add atmosphere. The tips, tactics and sarcastic asides from your controller (inset) are both useful and entertaining.



MegaRace

Publisher: Mindscape © 01444 246333 **Developer:** Cryo **Save Game:** 3 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

MegaRace comes to the 3DO system laden down with rave PC reviews, praising the next generation graphics which come courtesy of Silicon Graphics rendering. While the cars and road are real-time, the gorgeous back-grounds are being spooled off disk – it's a neat compromise which demonstrates not only Cryo's technical wizardry with Silicon Graphics rendering, but also a genuine artistic flair. Undersea race tracks feature sharks swimming overhead, hitting a go-faster arrow triggers a slick speed-blur and one hazard produces a gorgeous double-vision effect.

The programmers' wit even comes through in the TV commentator who, while incredibly annoying, actually has some great lines. The game he introduces is a futuristic, planet-hopping racer where the objective is to destroy a set number of cars before time runs out. It's a simple enough game and the game is undoubtedly the best looking, sounding and playing MegaRace yet – easily wiping the floor with the PC



This is an over-the-shoulder wetdream of a game, smoothly blending witty intro sequences into superlative in-game graphics.



game. Yet it's as a game that MegaRace on any machine is at its weakest. The graphics which cause bystanders' jaws to drop matter little when you're

actually playing, tightly focused on a fast-moving but ultimately simplistic and repetitive game. There's plenty of power-ups and the overall plot all helps make it very worthwhile, indeed if you want to amaze neighbours or simply give the old

peepers a treat, MegaRace is undoubtedly a gorgeous confection. Just don't expect the gameplay to match the superb audio-visuals. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Total Eclipse

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 9730011 **Developer:** In-house **Save Game:** No **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

While Total looks even better than games like Microcosm, which stream FMV background graphics off the CD, there's one rather huge twist. Namely, these graphics aren't being pulled off disk. Rather than simply playing an uninteractive movie, prerendered on a Silicon Graphics workstation, the 3DO system is actually manufacturing these images on the fly. As you fly into a canyon, the multiplayer's custom chips are mapping pre-drawn textures across the canyon's surfaces. Blank, computer-type surfaces are magically lined and pocked with unbelievable detail. The 3DO system also does this to all the enemy ships and buildings.

Now this is all very clever technically, but the point is these graphics are fully interactive. You can crash into them, you can turn them on their head by doing a stomach-churning 360° roll which is totally, hair-raisingly controllable. You get to choose your way through ravines, you can dive down into valleys to pick out enemy silos... it's the difference between playing a game and watching a graphic demo.

On top of this you've got excellent sound effects

The Total Eclipse in question is undoubtedly of 16bit gaming – after this there could be no more doubts about the 3DO system's power.



and a brilliant, wailing rock guitar sound. When sitting late at night playing this, you wonder why should you ever have to put up with anything less? Hang-on-the-wall, drop-dead interactive graphics and a classic soundtrack. It's what shoot-'em-ups are supposed to be.

The game's structure consists of 20 levels, all quite long and increasingly tough, divided between tunnel and above-ground sections with five different planets offering varying terrain types. There's a wide range of power-up weapons and at the end of each

planet there's your regulation, humongous mega-guardian. These can take ages to kill, but this is a relatively small price to pay for one of the smoothest, slickest shoot-'em-ups yet seen, inside or outside an arcade. It's what your 3DO was made for. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Operation JumpGate

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 Developer: ATG Save Game: 5 SRAM Slots Price: £29.99 Available: Now

First things first. The superlative intro from *Shock Wave* has, remarkably, been surpassed for *Operation JumpGate*, which features a mini-movie of epic proportions to whet the appetite. This trailer looks better than any recent sci-fi movie, with extraordinary War Of The Worlds inspired vignettes of death and destruction that simply astonish, both in their variety and vision.

In-game, everything looks familiar at first, with the cockpit sheath of your F177 fighter folding back to reveal the barren landscapes of Mars – the aliens' staging post for yet another invasion attempt. This time, however, you're taking the war to them with Commander Stewart, your controller from the first game, commanding the battle group. Nevertheless, she takes time to pass information and tactical plans via a small VDU on your control panel. These info bursts are significantly enhanced over *Shock Wave*, with more detailed analysis and impressive computer visuals.

More assistance is required however, as these new missions are significantly more sophisticated than their predecessors. *JumpGate* inserts a variety of mini missions into each large section, so there's a variety of situations to absorb and tackle, from destroying energy fields to allow bombing sorties, to avoiding alien ships employing radar jamming devices and flash flares to blind you. And it's not just the missions that have become more sophisticated. Enemy spacecraft and ground artillery have been revolutionised in the seven year hiatus – they are ferocious, both in firepower and manoeuvrability. The new fighter planes, all gorgeously texture mapped and animated, are lovingly designed, from conventional, Star Wars inspired snub fighters to ethereal, darting, bat-shaped planes that hover on

The texture mapped design of the alien craft (below) is superb. Each has a distinctive flight pattern, can shake off your target locking system with ease and hit fast and hard. *JumpGate* is serious arcade action.



This Mars-based coda to *Shock Wave*'s epic alien invasion of Earth was originally intended to be included in the original game. Unfortunately, deadline pressures meant it had to be left out – delayed for this five mission data disc, set some seven years later and with a far fiercer challenge...

their side, almost impossible to hit, before spinning around and screaming into your cockpit window. Ground installations which previously sat inertly waiting for destruction, now boast laser turrets and heavy defences. There's also walkers, homing mines, and small, impossibly fast strike planes to defend in formation over sensitive alien installations. The enemy attack routines also seem more intelligent; assaults are less kamikaze-like as fighters circle, chase and bomb, making continual forward acceleration essential for survival.

Your stock of homing missiles vanish in a blink, as you attempt to escape from hostile territory in search of a welcoming refuel craft. The option to just blast through the terrain avoiding air traffic is closed for your ship, however, as surviving enemies regroup at later points in the mission to attack again. Later levels boast a sky full of enemy hardware and explosions, leaving you literally dazzled by the



The icy caverns and valleys of level two, above, hide an army of enemy aircraft and ground artillery. Fast, precise shooting is required to progress further into this tough blaster.

intensity of the action.

Whilst actual play in *JumpGate* is significantly improved over *Shock Wave* then, the flaw that ran through the original is sadly still present: missions are even longer here, each having five or six mini sections. But every time you die, you're thrown back to the very start. Since mission one alone takes twenty minutes to complete, inevitably there's a lot of time spent replaying earlier sections, which is very frustrating. It's a lazy way to extend the game's life, and considering that you must buy the original *Shock Wave* to play these five (admittedly long) missions, *JumpGate*'s value for money could be called into question. That said, fans of the original will need no persuading to buy this much improved update. If you relished the brilliant sci-fi theme, superbly realised to provide a fantastic atmosphere in *Shock Wave*, *Operation JumpGate* will be a welcome chance to continue the adventure, with seriously improved gameplay and even better graphics. ☐ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Captured right, is that rare moment when your cursor flashes to tell you a target is locked. Using lasers is tough, but guided missiles are extravagant and must be saved for tougher craft.



The War Of The Worlds style intro (above) is packed with tremendous pieces of art, that reach out and pull you into this visually stunning game. Also impressive are the brilliantly designed new enemy craft, insets left and above, all lightning fast.

Above, your attack coordinator, who adds a dash of glamour to this 50's B-movie extravaganza. Oh, the joy of being reprimanded by her enticing tones.

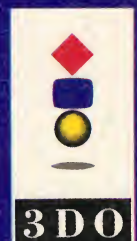


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Off-World Interceptor

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 9730011 Developer: In-house Save Game: No Price: £39.99 Available: Now

The brilliance of the *Total Eclipse* graphics engine made its reuse almost inevitable, but *Interceptor* both improves on it and uses it for an entirely different type of game.

There are six different planets, each with six or seven levels to race across, the object being simply to get to from one end to the other. As with *Total* you can't turn around, but the landscape is so broad there's still plenty of exploration to carry out finding the most lucrative (or safest) route through each level. When you finish a planet you also get to meet an end-level boss – usually an enormous, heavily armoured tank. It's one tough challenge, but while Story Mode has a fixed route through the planets, Arcade Mode lets you practice each one separately. This is good fun as they're all so varied, but it does diminish the incentive to play through normally.

Two-player Mode is better structured with each planet offering three battle sites – win two and the planet is yours, win all the planets and you've won the game. Moreover you can switch your cars at any point – an important consideration since their capabilities vary dramatically. Some come with guided missiles or lasers which, while ideal for beginners, also make the game a bit easy. Initially things do seem rather simple with warp gates to put you behind the other player – a trick required by the fact you can't turn around. However, with practise the

Intimate scraps with enemy buggies are common and exhilarating and the detail on the vehicles is great. Head-to-head, bottom, is non-stop action, with everything moving at high speed.

The 3DO system is becoming something of a nirvana for racing fanatics with *Road Rash* and *Need For Speed* blasting away all Earthly competition, while *Interceptor* provides a mega-blasting sci-fi variant.

game becomes very playable as you become more adept with rear-fire mines and various other weapons.

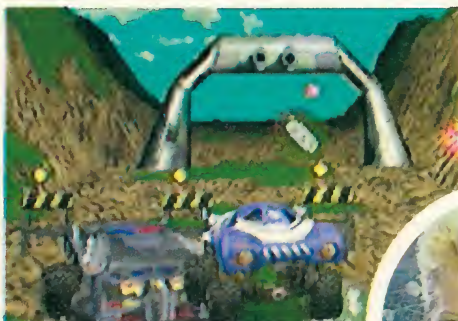
The game's main appeal though is one-player with the screen overloading on speed, detail and incoming fire! The terrain is the most outrageously varied ever seen, boasting endless hills, ravines, pits and ridges to race along. With ever more tight time limits the landscape alone might be enemy enough for some games, but not *Interceptor*. Each planet introduces some new hazard, from pop-up lasers to electric towers to gunship copters. The list is endless and the screen is always swarming with lasers and missiles. And then there's enemy buggies and cycles that provide the stiffest (and most thrilling) competition, initially just blasting and ramming, but eventually laying mines and using rear-fire lasers on you. It's these high speed chases, whizzing down roads and through ravines trying to escape the nippy

enemies, that really make *Interceptor* quite unique.

To stand some chance of survival you can spend any money you've collected at the end-level shop. Extra lives (clones), missiles, nitros, shields, engines, tyres and (most expensive of all) cars are all on offer. Some of these appear in-game as collectibles alongside specials such as a screen-busting nuclear smart bomb. But really it's the superb speed and complete controllability over your buggy that makes this huge fun.

Overall *Off-World Interceptor* is a great arcade game with a superb rock soundtrack. If you can cope with the incredibly overloaded, superfast graphics the only serious flaw is the lack of a save game – just as in the arcade, you only get to see the end if you're willing to play it through in one go! **mcw**

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Road Rash

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Monkey Doo **Save Game:** 10 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

The most striking thing about *Road Rash* is how complete a package it is. From the opening power chords to the flame-licked 'winner' logo this a perfectly orchestrated experience. It's not only the endless FMV and arcade-style visuals, it's details like 3D rendered flybys of bikes for sale and intro tracks from Soundgarden and Therapy? – even the menu screens are bizarre but beautiful works of art.

The most important thing to say is just how playable a game this is. The speed is unbelievable, but you always feel in total control and never doubt the fairness of a crash. If you touch an obstacle glancingly then you only lose a little speed and energy: it's only if you hit something square on that you go flying off the bike.

On early levels roads are wide, traffic infrequent and collisions treated generously. But then tracks tighten to two-lane death-traps thick with oncoming traffic, while competing bikes get even faster. Yet the controls are so tight, the feel so good, that you can whip along the pavement, clip joggers who foolishly play chicken, squeeze between two speeding cars with a whisker to spare, even slide onto the grass and hills at the side to avoid trouble. Then there's 150mph fights with fellow bikers and pursuing cops. The realism of the crunching bicycle chains is more satisfying than most beat-'em-ups.

All of this is realised with stunning graphic flair. The Spartan wastelands of the Mega Drive version have been replaced with lush countryside, finely detailed cities and sweeping coastlines. The 3DO system's twin graphic engines work overtime generating stunningly realistic texture maps at breathtaking speed. Outside of an arcade there has never been anything like this. The way landscapes rise and fall, the speed at which buildings whip past – it's



Road Rash is the game even the little girls in big DMs like. Ultra-fast, ultra-violent it's what videogaming's all about.

astonishingly realistic and utterly convincing.

The 3DO system also excels in the FMV department, Cinepak faultlessly digitising some 40 different specially shot video clips to reward or mock your performance. Not French New Wave perhaps, but skilfully composed little vignettes a la MTV.

The only slight disappointment is the game

structure. As with the original you can see any of the five main locations, from the Pacific Highway to urban hell, right from the start. When you complete all five, you progress to the next stage where the tracks are harder but not graphically all that different. This is a minor whinge though, after all if the game's challenge isn't enough reward, how about Ollies' bike shop. Earn



enough cash for a superbike and the increase in performance is terrific, especially with nitrous injection. Choosing the right bike at the right time is also an important tactical element.

Overall, this is pretty much your definitive EA game: arcade-style instant addiction married to home computer style depth and long-term challenge. Unmissable. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

The Need For Speed

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Pioneer **Save Game:** 3 SRAM Slots per track **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now



ver the past year or so, the hype for the superconsoles trailing in the 3DO system's wake has centred on arcade games like *Ridge Racer* and *Daytona*. So it's a welcome surprise for 3DO system owners to find their machine being graced with a game which looks just as good, only with gameplay calculated for home use instead of a quick blast at the arcades. Rather than a single car, a single track, *Need* offers no less than eight of the world's most fabulous cars to race on three fantastic courses – coastal, urban and mountainous – each split into three massive stages. You can choose to race against the clock, or a computer controlled player in a car of your choice. While it doesn't have the immediately frenetic appeal of being in a race with 13 identical cars and just 30 seconds to reach the next stage, it is overall a much more involving experience. Chasing after a Lamborghini Diablo at over two hundred mph, with traffic coming both ways and a police car in pursuit, is a test of anyone's driving skills!

Programmed by EA Canada, with many of the same people who worked on Accolade's classic *Test Drive* series, this is a race game with the emphasis on realism. While this can mean boring – and many people never did get *Test Drive*'s specialist appeal – with *Need* this is exactly the opposite. When real drivers get on this game you just can't pry them off. They don't bother about chasing after the other car, forget that, they practice doing powerslide turns in a Ferrari 512TR Testarossa, spinning the car around and around with steam glowing off the wheels. Then they slam the car into reverse, get it up to about eighty and shift into first for a brilliant Sweeney-type

Forget all those overhyped coin-op games, *Need For Speed* is king of the road with superlative graphics, sampled sound effects and ultra-realistic car handling.

handbrake turn. When they finally venture off the start line it's to see if they can get the cars to lift off on hilly roads and, of course, they can.

Sponsored by Car & Track, a US magazine which rigorously tests cars' real performance, *Need* claims to have all the real time to speed figures.

The handling of the various cars is brilliantly judged, heavy cars like the Viper really wallow about on corners, while the Ferrari seems glued to the road with its huge fat tyres. The detail really is incredible, a 'for example' being the way the Supra suddenly surges when its turbos cut in – which can be hairy if it happens on a tight corner. With so many fantastic cars to play around with this is a game no-one seems to grow tired of.

If you do bother to actually race, then the game rewards you with some superb sights such as a fleet of balloons lifting off, numerous bridges, plenty of tunnels including a deadringer for Daytona's and an all but buried Statue of Liberty taken from *Planet Of The Apes*. The texturing of the road and the various roadside objects is just incredible, building on the stunning *Road Rash* (whose programmers contributed to *Need*), but adding far more variety. It doesn't have quite the same breathtaking speed, but is much more realistic. Probably the finest graphic flair is on the



supercars themselves – knock dead gorgeous with superb texture mapping recreating every detail of the cars, even the undersides... Which brings us to crashes.

There has never been a game with crashes as dramatic as those in *Need*. Because everything is handled by the game as real 3D objects, moving with real physical laws in force, the crashes are different every time. I've seen a Ferrari flipped onto its nose, spin on a corner and then come to a rest pointing downwards. A Diablo has hit an oncoming car with such force that they both went into the air, one coming to land balanced on top of the other. Then other cars and trucks come piling in, spinning about while your opponent's car invariably nips through a gap and into the lead.

All this chaos can be viewed again and again by either calling an instant replay, or at the end of the



There are no less than eight supercars: Ferrari 512TR Testarossa, Dodge Viper, Corvette ZR1, Lamborghini Diablo VT, Porsche 911, Mazda RX-7, Toyota Supra Turbo, & Honda NSX.





stage when you can review either the entire stage or just the high-lights. As in the game itself you can choose between in car, chase and helicopter views, but there's also extra views from the opponent's car, chasing police cars and more. If the game weren't so much fun you'd probably spend ages with this, or even admiring the super slick FMV introducing each of the supercars. You also get FMV of your incredibly smarmy, annoying American opponent who superciliously comments on how you did in the previous stage – adding real incentive to make him suffer in defeat.

Without doubt, *Need For Speed* is one of the best games ever written. I've been totally addicted to it for

over six months now. While coming first isn't that difficult, collecting all the bonuses, beating the best times of your friends or those in 3DO Magazine, is incredibly challenging. And, with such great graphics and unbelievably rich, realistic handling it's always enthralling. You can even have fun simply relaxing, cruising down the various courses just like in a real supercar. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Striker

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 Developer: Rage Save Game: 4 SRAM slots Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Striker has long been the speed fanatic's favourite footie sim, causing an absolute sensation on the SNES with its perfect blend of speed and action. Now it's arrived on 3DO with just the same impact. Whilst owners of other next generation machines would kill for a football sim as stunning as EA's *FIFA International Soccer*, Rage have delivered to the 3DO a product even more polished and playable than its illustrious rival. Loosely based on their SNES smash, the developers have completely re-engineered the game engine to provide an even more exciting interface, all dressed up with some stunning new graphics and sonics. Watching *Striker* being played you can't help but smile at the outrageous flourish Rage have pulled off, and wonder how many more secrets lurk within the 3DO's matt black box.

For all of this *Striker* doesn't immediately impress. The front end, packed with FMV and stadium fly-bys is slick, but not as showy as *FIFA's*; in game options are similar, with a variety of tournaments, weather conditions, strategies and 38 international teams, as well as the now obligatory arcade and simulation modes (the sim mode offers slightly more sophisticated controls and is well worth progressing to). Click through more FMV though, and the excitement suddenly escalates. Just like *FIFA*, *Striker* revels in smooth pans and zooms across the stadium to intro the main action.

In-game the visuals are no less impressive. While many have, quite rightly, compared watching *FIFA* to watching a real match due to its fluid camera angles and realistic player animation, *Striker* is like watching a TV match on a high definition TV, with the colour turned up and the players on steroids. The elegant pace of *FIFA* has been surpassed here by lightning fast footballers, racing up and down the field like bullets, the screen effortlessly keeping pace without a trace of slowdown. It's not just the speed, however, that blows you away, it's the quality of the sprites themselves. They're simply stunning, perfectly drawn and animated humans, which don't break up or distort however close you get (and you get so close you can make out their faces at times). You really can see your footballer stretch to make a tackle, or put his head down as you tap to make him speed up in chase. Jumps to trap and catch the ball are convincing, as are the goalies, who dive to collect and curl up on the floor to protect. They are incredible, and make watching as much fun as playing, continued exposure revealing more and more quirks and abilities, all reached

While Elite's Onside is still warming itself up on the sidelines, Rage's Striker remains the sole British challenge to the superb Canadian (!) FIFA. So which one deserves 3DO's World Cup?

through skilful manipulation rather than random 'show' effects.

The other revelation is the transcendental brightness of the game. Technically, *Striker* sacrifices some colour subtlety in return for speed compared to *FIFA*, but the difference actually works to its advantage. The colours are vibrant and clean, the stadium so brightly lit that the crowd are plainly visible, while the various weather conditions are exceptionally varied in graphics and their effect on gameplay. It all adds up to a game that somehow doesn't look like your regular videogame. It has a bright, freshness of design that makes it more like a cartoon, invariably stopping people passing through our office to gawk at the on-screen action. It's that striking.

The soundtrack isn't quite so distinctive. Inevitably it echoes *FIFA's*, yet while it's mixed lower and doesn't have the same slickness, it's still remarkably effective with the atmospheric chants and roars stoking the fever pitch excitement to the max. It's in the gameplay department that *Striker* delivers its most impressive flourish though, with power bars (absent from the SNES version) adding immeasurably to the pleasure and depth of the game. Instead of walloping the ball upfield or passing, each shot can be measured in length with a simple power bar, which makes sophisticated play much easier to achieve. Coupled with the blinding speed, *Striker* is amazingly easy to enjoy straight away, whilst offering a depth of play that makes it a serious long term challenge to beat the better teams. The sophistication of the sprite interaction means that individual players can develop distinctive styles of play, and it's here that the deep hook of *Striker* appears. As with all the most compulsive games, *Striker* is superficially simple, yet offers genuinely involved gameplay with players able to adopt their own strategies. It's a tribute to the programmers, who've been slaving over hot devel-



Striker has brilliant slow-motion replays, from several views to celebrate a great goal.

opment kits for a long time, that two-player games feel so engaging and compulsive.

To cap things off with the generosity of a loving parent, Rage have included the famous indoor arena. Why famous? Because it's indoor, frantic action with no fouls, rebounding action off the walls and the most intense footballing experience ever seen on a videogame system outside of the SNES version. Until now. Add CD sound, and unbelievably fast 3D graphics and the cult football sensation is complete on the 3DO player, pumped up by a factor of one hundred. The only problem with the indoor game is that it gives you an awfully difficult dilemma as to which game style to play...

This is, without doubt then, an incredibly successful integration of next generation presentation and classically shaped gameplay. No doubt there's going to be fanatical debate over which is better, *Striker's* sheer pace pitted against *FIFA's* slick presentation. With no 6-player option, *Striker* can't compete with *FIFA* for getting a crowd of players around your 3DO at the same time, but as a one or two-player game this is going to win a lot of British fans. Unsurprisingly, Rage know exactly how to recreate the look and feel of a rainy afternoon Wembley confrontation with perfect precision. Without doubt this is an unmissable release for footie fans, while even the uncommitted will have to search wide and far for a better two-player game. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

3DO
Magazine
Highly Recommended



A throw-in, below right, shows off the superb scaling and zooming. The main action is no less impressive though, with an army of footballers scurrying about with dazzling speed.



Set pieces, below, allow the game to zoom in close on the action so that you can marvel at the superlative graphics in detail. Indoor football, left, provides the most immediate and punishing action.



FIFA International Soccer

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Extended Play **Save Game:** 10 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

The anticipation for this title has been enormous and first impressions seem to confirm EA have bettered even *Madden* in creating the most visually impressive, slickly packaged game yet. From the superb FMV intro, spliced with in-game action scenes (hardly distinguishable from real life) to the multitude of play options, camera angles, slow motion controls and stunning, sampled soundtracks, *FIFA* looks and sounds as good as any game written. In play, you can believe you're watching a real football match, so detailed are the sprites and so smooth is the animation, all panned and zoomed across with unbelievable smoothness. For the first few games, you can't resist running everything back in slow motion, choosing the free camera view to whiz all over the place, watching the action from every conceivable angle. Even more so than *John Madden*, these slow motion flashbacks are almost a game in their own right.

In game, despite the multitude of views available, the Stadium camera is most helpful, providing a smooth panning horizontal track of the action, and keeping as much of the pitch (about a third) in view at one time. Over-the-Shoulder, Ball-Cam, End Zone and Side-Line are all nice to replay action, but each pose difficulties in some aspect of play, making passing especially difficult.

Truly then, *FIFA* for the 3DO system is a stunning looking game and veterans of previous *FIFA* incarnations will be incredulous at the visual panache, the awesome action-sensitive, stadium-shaking soundtrack and intelligent camera cuts (for goal kicks and corners etc). Unlike most footie games, long matches are entirely absorbing with the audio-visuals providing an engrossing atmosphere. However, as with all versions of *FIFA*, graphics do extract a penalty in gameplay.

These days most footie fans have become used to the absurd arcade speed of the microdot graphics of

After the ultimate American football sim (*Madden*) and the fastest racer (*Road Rash*), have EA produced the definitive footie game?

Kick Off and *Sensi*. Compared to these *FIFA* feels a little sluggish at times, which may be more realistic but less excusable is the controllability. In *Sensi* it's perfectly easy to put together blindingly fast successions of passes and strikes. Here, passing is more cumbersome, and interceptions almost the rule rather than the exception, making flowing play difficult. Another irksome flaw is the

imprecise nature of tackling. Unlike almost every other football game I've played, where tackles are swift and decisive, in *FIFA*, opposing players just wrestle with each other for several seconds.

Of course, these problems are no less pronounced on other versions and that hasn't stopped it becoming one of the bestselling carts ever. The 32bit glories of the 3DO version mean it should be even more successful, but compared to the world-shattering hype, gameplay is still only enhanced and *FIFA* isn't as definitive as say *Madden*. *Rage*'s faster-running *Striker* is still in with a chance for the cup, but in the meantime *FIFA* gives the 3DO system another genre classic which is essential for any footie fan. Moreover, if you've got five pals and (more problematically) five joypads then the six-player game is fantastic fun. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Above, a header keeps the ball in play. Inset, flashy moves come easily to *FIFA* players, and, of course, they're always intentional. The slow-mo and zoom facility prove handy for debate.



A mad dash down the middle in close-up, and a chance to admire the characterful footballer sprites in action. The animation is excellent. Below, an easy strike shouldn't cause any problems for the computer controlled keeper. They're all very good.



John *Madden* Football

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 Developer: High Score Save Game: 3 SRAM Slots Price: £39.99 Available: Now

The incredibly detailed, beautifully animated sprites of *Madden* on the 3DO system will be a revelation to any one familiar with Mega Drive and SNES conversions. As will the stereo sound, FMV intro, sampled in-game commentary and smooth panning action replays. Since American Football itself is so reliant on big game razzmatazz and spectacle, this is an apt title for EA to showcase the 3DO system's abilities on. And as gameplay itself is even more gorgeously addictive and engrossing, all this visual sumptuousness is welcome icing on the cake.

The most significant graphical enhancement, which in turn boosts gameplay considerably, is that the action is viewed much closer, and in far greater detail. This makes sophisticated plays far more realistic than the fat, indistinct players from lesser consoles. Although scrimmages are still an explosion of confusion, the superbly realistic sprites are much more easily distinguished between – and it's this clarity that makes *Madden* much more accessible to football novices.

Madden was always designed for beginners and your 3DO system will do practically everything until you decide to take control. It couldn't be easier to get into, but it's still American football and working out the right strategy is essential to both success and enjoyment. Basically, each team has four attempts, or downs, to make ten yards towards the opponent's goal. If this distance isn't covered, play switches around. You can make the distance by a combination of runs and throws: there are in fact over 100 different plays, each represented by easy to understand onscreen diagrams. Working out which play is best for each situation, against the defensive move you expect the other side to make, is an intriguing battle of wits.

As a complete novice to the sport – in fact, I usually take pains to avoid watching it – all it took were a few goes to have me entirely addicted. I particu-



Madden was one of the first 3DO multiplayer releases to justify the next generation hype, marrying state-of-the-art presentation in-game and out to fantastic playability.

larly enjoyed learning new moves and implementing them successfully, revelling in the game's fantastic controllability.

Authentic team stats, FMV sequences and brilliant sound and narration all conspire to make this even more cruelly addictive.

Highly Recommended
3DO Magazine

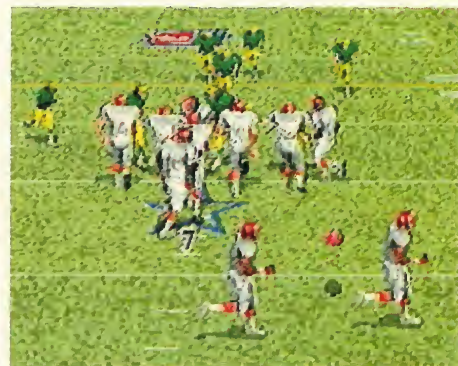
The ultimate heresy in this 'soccer'-loving land is that I'd argue American is better than British in the videogame stakes. In a footie game there's only a modicum of control available over your team, play being inevitably focused on the player in possession. *Madden*, by contrast, gives a feeling of complete control, and thus far greater satisfaction. Whilst some might find the stop-start nature of play off-putting, the pauses to plan your next move are completely engrossing. In fact, they only accentuate the excitement of the actual plays, short bursts of adrenaline that are riveting in their potential for glorious progression up-field or stomach-churning interceptions and failure. Despite stiff competition, this remains the most impressive game I've ever



Above, a throw down the middle looks possible. Below, plenty of space to work with and it looks like a run down the right side is coming.

seen, on anything anywhere. Whilst single player games don't offer quite as much excitement as the extraordinary two-player matches, this is still an unmissable piece of software. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Slam 'N' Jam '95

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 9730011 **Developer:** Left Field Productions **Save Game:** 3 SRAM slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Firstly, an admission. At school, I was such an embarrassment to the male sex at football ("Don't run from it, run to it!") that I was banished to the girls' sports area to play netball every Thursday afternoon. The humiliation was deep (I didn't look good in a Left Wing bib) and the psychological damage lasting, but I found out that netball, the cissified sister of basketball, was a truly intense sporting experience. The five-on-five teamplay means there's no room for a weak link or shirker, everyone's got to find space, make a shot, get back to goal, steal and get back attacking every minute of the game, making the sport indisputably more fast paced than English football. Any cynics put off by the all the typically American hype should wise up, the phenomenal pace of this sport makes it ideal for a videogame.

Crystal Dynamics certainly make it easy to get pulled in, presenting the game in a fashion that absolutely demands attention. The players themselves frequently scale up to about half the height of the screen, each sprite so detailed that you can recognise each one individually by their differing hair-styles, expressions and height. The 'behind the hoop' perspective lets you admire them storming towards you, smoothly thundering into the foreground, until one scores and his jubilant face grins maniacally at you. These are outstanding game graphics and, even more amazingly, they don't slowdown, flicker or distort in any way. They just do exactly what you tell them, with the odd, unexpected flourish to punctuate a particularly stylish move or goal. The realistic animation is partially due to rotoscoping of real basketball players, but rather than leave it at that the designers have added in comic touches and slight exaggerations to make them seem *more* than real. The graphics also help with gameplay – with just five players per side spotting a tiring player is crucial. With these humongous graphics, you soon spot which individual is not pulling his weight. Swift substitutions maintain your attacking edge and keep the team working together.

This being Crystal Dynamics, the psychotic attention to detail extends from the players to every other facet of the game. The shiny wooden court reflects the players feet while the crowd, rather than being an abstract mire of colour, feature hundreds of individually animated spectators, who jump to their feet and roar behind continuously rotating courtside ads.

The soundtrack of squeaky sneakers and roaring crowd is impressive enough, but the icing on the

After the massive 16bit success of NBA Jam and its Tournament follow-up, the marginal appeal of basketball seems finally about to change. At first glance, Slam could well be the game to do for basketball what Kylie Minogue did for Australian soap stars.

sonic cake is provided by CNN's Van Earl Wright. A huge range of soundbites have been skilfully coded into the game to provide a near-constant running commentary. His enjoyably over-excited blatherings really add to the satisfaction of pulling off a long shot or making a successful steal – it all adds up to making *Slam 'n' Jam* as complete an experience as you could wish. With a mountain of game

options, including match length, fatigue levels, switch end on or off, as well as match length and commentary on/off (keep it on) this is even more polished and exciting than EA's best sports sims.

Thankfully, having engineered such a superbly presented game, Crystal deliver the killer blow by ensuring the underlying game engine actually lives up to its looks. Passing and shooting is instinctive and enjoyable, switching between just five players is easy and responsive, whilst more difficult moves – such as stealing and blocking – take considerable practice to pull off successfully. Despite all the audiovisual trickery, you never once feel out of control or behind the action – everything and every-one moves and responds as fast as you could want.

Of course, the comparison everyone wants to hear is between *Slam 'N' Jam* and Acclaim's mega-hit *NBA Jam*. I loved the latter on SNES, the hyper exaggerated slam dunks and arcade-speed making for a real adrenaline rush. While *Slam 'N' Jam* clearly overwhelms it in presentation term, it's main edge is the considerably more realistic, in-depth gameplay. At heart it's a sim, not an arcade game, which actively rewards dedicated play and experi-



Slam the ball in the basket with enough energy and you get the sublime satisfaction of smashing the net support! Your player will hang there for a while, too, beaming at you with undiluted pride as your team jog back into defence.

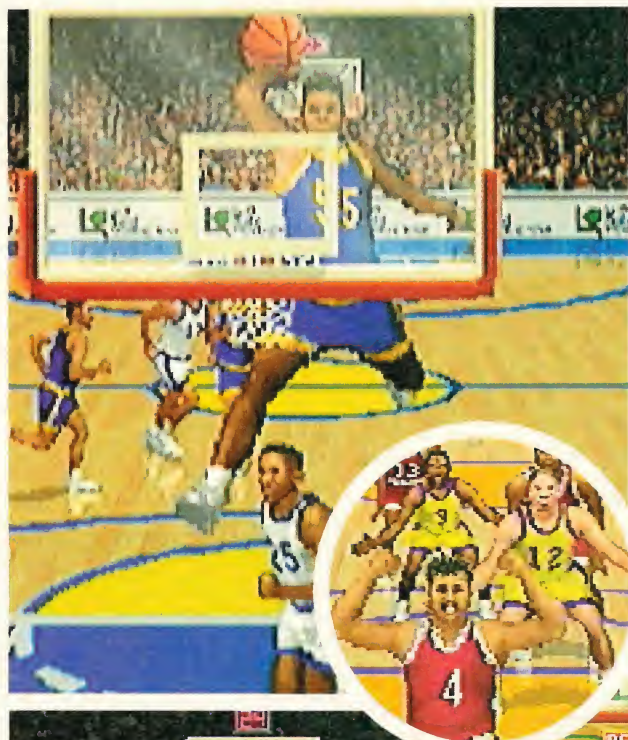
mentation with ever more lethal skills.

To the uninitiated, *Slam 'N' Jam* can seem almost banal at first. Like any other basketball sim, each team appears to take turns to score, with totals regularly topping the hundred mark. The key is to get into a rhythm, keeping the scores level, then steal or make a break to throw your opponent out. If they can't break back, they'll stay three or four points behind, and the pressure is unbearable. The leading team must keep the rhythm constant, whilst the losers are under intense tactical pressure to make a break. If they try and catch up with a wild, long distance shot they risk missing their regular, close-in two points for an easy goal and slipping further behind.

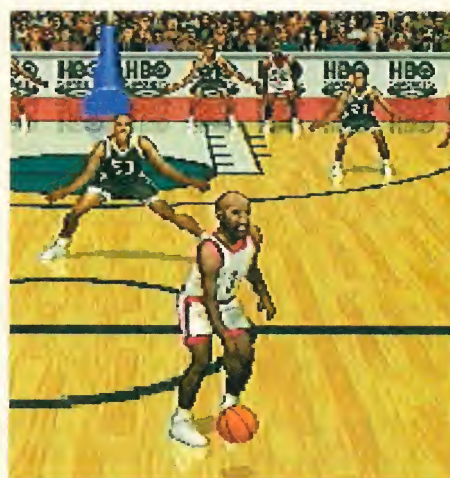
Stealing is difficult, as is preventing blocking goals without accidentally fowling (and giving away penalty shots), so for beginners, at least, the emphasis is on methodical, back and forth scoring, praying for a break.

In short, *Slam 'N' Jam* plays like a dream, as addictive in one-player mode as two. Exhibition matches are tough enough, but the tournament itself

Highly
3DO
Magazine
Recommended



Another glorious basket, and a chance to admire the atmospherically designed audience. Far left, top, a more extravagant couple of points, the camera zooming into the scorer as he slams the ball in. Below, practicing a few dribbling skills.



Above, a successful block. Right, a goal is celebrated by a victorious player. A throw-in, below right, should lead to a minimum points basket at least, with a simple feed to the scorer. Far right, another block defeats an attacker and the action switches to the far end of the court.

is an even more daunting challenge. Obviously the grandiose graphics provide a big attention grabber, as does the exhilarating soundtrack, but ultimately it's the gameplay that pulls you deep. Once you get to grips with the principles of the game, and when you start developing original tactics and, more importantly, enjoying success from them, *Slam 'n' Jam* takes a life-threatening hold on you. With such astonishing presentation and huge, beefy characters at last everyone can appreciate the pace of this amazing game. Simply outstanding. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

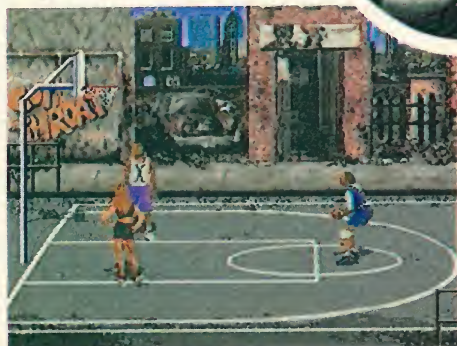
Jammit

Publisher: BMG © 0171 9730011 Developer: GTE Interactive Save Game: Passwords Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Setting a game in a ghetto may be acceptable for a crime-fighting blaster or beat-'em-up, where the hero is liberating or fleeing his economically deprived surroundings, but playing a character who actually lives in a (politically incorrect) dump is downright perverse. Did the market research guys figure that kids feel a hip affinity with young, broke, street basketball wasters? Are all future videogame alter-egos to be resiliently apathetic slackers? You're so hard-up, apparently, that you can't even afford the dubious luxury of sporting friends, so a full team game is out of the question, and instead you cavort and lob with just one, makeshift basketball net in one of three, desperately derelict settings, atmospherically decorated with burning oil drums and graffiti-sprayed brick walls. These graphics are not of the standard we've come to expect of the 3DO, and betray the 16-bit origins of the game, as do the rather simply animated three main characters. They're certainly not badly done, but with such a simple scenario, they really need to be extra special by way of compensation. However, they are characterful, and the bleached blonde, tightly-clad Roxy soon proved to be a popular character choice. A wider range of basketball players would have been appreciated though, as experimentation between just three is fairly short lived.

The action in *Jammit* is extraordinarily simple; each character can run, leap, attack (foul) and dribble the ball, the most common aim being to reach twenty-one points before your opponent, although ten point sudden death scenarios appear later on. The further away from the net you score, the more points you get, and pushing or shoving rewards your opponent with three penalty shots. The screen scrolls (not too smoothly) across about one and a half screens worth of tarmac, giving you free reign to dodge the

The two-on-one final battle is the toughest scrap, with fouls galore.



This ancient MegaDrive game doesn't seem a likely source of inspiration for 3DO conversion, its previous incarnation being generally ill-received due to the abundance of excellent full team basketball games available. But since Jammit is the first 3DO dabble at 'netball for men', the slate is clean to assess this thoroughly peculiar title.

irksome hoodlum pursuing you, but whilst this outrageously simplistic premise appears moronic to begin with, things soon appear to be better than the outline would suggest.

Before each match, you can gamble as much money as you've got on the match outcome, and after you've cleaned out your opponent (the bigger your bet, the fewer sessions required to empty his pocket) you're moved on to a new game style. These are progressively more entertaining variations of one-on-one basketball – all shots must be made from moving X's, certain scores must be leapfrogged to avoid point deductions, shots must be clean or they're ignored – culminating in a two-against-one climax that is both great reward and good fun. The game is packed with streetwise samples as the street gang 'dis' and mock each other, and a noisy beatbox blasts out hip hop riffs that all



The sublime Roxy scores again (sadly, not with me) against the rather ominous backdrop.

add to the atmosphere.

The only graphical flair *Jammit* can boast of (apart from the delicious Roxy), is the close-up cut-ins that appear when you actually leap for the basket, showing the players in more detail to assist blocks and shots. Although these aren't exactly state-of-the-art (the players float rather too much and are minimally animated), they do add some visual panache conspicuously lacking from the rest of the game. They also eliminate arguments as to who actually scored or blocked successfully.

In one-player mode, these variations must be played in order (with a handy password saving your progress), but in two-player, any gamestyle and any of the three scummy locations can be chosen, and there's no doubt that the game comes into its own with two players pushing and jostling against each other. Despite, or rather because of the immense simplicity of play, the action is fiercely addictive and maddeningly competitive. There's a wide range of tactics to develop for each style of game, the stark objectives belying a fairly sophisticated core playability. Despite a sense of regret at the retrograde graphics, this visual drabness and poor animation fails to entirely sabotage *Jammit*. It's still playable and when originally released it had no competition. Nowadays, though, there's *Slam 'N Jam...* □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



World Cup Golf

Publisher: US Gold © 0121 606 1800 Developer: Arc Save Game: 2 SRAM Slots Price: £44.99 Available: Now

The perennial success of golfing games on every conceivable format since the dawn of video games isn't difficult to comprehend. Few sports are as relaxing as making a long drive down the open green, nor as expensively exclusive – making simulation considerably more affordable than reality.

In the pursuit of producing a sim as close to reality as possible, Arc have stuffed *World Cup Golf* with digitised backgrounds and FMV sequences. Set in Puerto Rico, the various scenes seem a little less colourful than you might expect, and large, digitised player graphics are conspicuous by their absence, but the level of detail is impressive. The obsession with realism also comes through in the control system, a vast wealth of options being available through an exceptionally friendly interface, each control bringing forth a window from which to access the finer details. Fade, draw, top and back spin are all easily achieved, along with stance, backspin and everything else you'd expect. Hitting the ball (the main thing really) is nevertheless simple and effective, allowing you to soon build the confidence for heroic shots with wildly inappropriate clubs, just for the hell of it. Especially fun is trying wacky slices around trees just to test the realism of the program – it passes with flying colours.

By way of contrast, the much lauded FMV

With digitised stills for every view rendered in *World Cup Golf*, US Gold seem confident this is as real a golf game as you'll ever see.

sequences which attend every tee-off aren't that impressive. The window in which they appear is small and, while slick, they aren't as dramatic as the simpler animations in 16bit PGA. They also cause a brief pause for disc accessing which interrupts that much sought after illusion of realism. Also irksome is that there's just a single 18-hole course – the price of such detailed recreation of the Dorado Beach course where the 40th anniversary of *World Cup Golf* is due to take place.

To ensure long-lasting appeal there are, however, no less than 15 different championship formats, from the usual skins and medal games, to the enjoyable one club and putter game, which is an excellent way of learning all the types of strikes that can be applied to a ball, without having to worry about different clubs. People with golf-loving friends are also well catered for, with up to 32 two-player teams able to join in on any of the 18 holes (which can be practised individually by perfectionists).

Overall it's the fine detail, the incredible variety of



options, that will get golf fans queuing up for *World Cup Golf*. There's no less than 72 national teams to compete against, equipped with some very tough, smart computer-controlled players. While non-fans will hate the sluggishness when you hit the ball, for enthusiasts this is the most realistic sim out there – although Electronic Arts' imminent 3DO PGA Golf is due to give it serious competition soon. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★



The huge array of tournament styles to play, above, plus the welcome practice options are very impressive.



Above, in the rough and in the shade. From the map, it would appear I'm rather off course. Top right, the pull-out menus are both easy to use and very accurate in implementation. There's certainly no difficulty for beginners in tackling *World Cup Golf*. The wind and other weather conditions, right, can be adjusted then saved. Left, a welcome easy putt.



Waialae Country Club

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 **Developer:** T&E Soft **Save Game:** Player stats to SRAM **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

As with the prequel, *Waialae Country Club* features enormous (half screen tall) players which really catch the eye with their smooth, surprisingly accurate animation. Especially appealing is the way various shots such as chips and puts have been digitised, so that each play is realistically portrayed. Equally seductive are the course graphics themselves, which are significantly brighter and more atmospheric than *World Cup Golf* – get too close to the crowd and a cluster of amusingly digitised people can be admired (T&E Soft programmers, methinks?).

The commitment to flashy graphics also comes through with the control system, *Pebble's* novel, three-quarter power circle overlaying the swing to dramatic, and realistic, effect. Stance, fade and draw are easily adjusted, but the level of fine tuning doesn't seem quite as precise as the U. S. Gold game. Shots are taken quickly, and the screen updating has been vastly improved over *Pebble Beach*, with replays and caddies (advice on or off



After the great success of their first golfing sim, *Pebble Beach Golf Links*, Panasonic have moved the action to Hawaii for another 18-hole championship.

all at hand to help you learn from your mistakes.

As with *World Cup Golf*, the biggest weakness in *Waialae* is the lack of courses. One 18-hole championship doesn't really offer enough long term play value for expert golfers, but the Cinepak FMV flybys of each hole and the all-round excellent presentation certainly help compensate.

Whilst the slick visuals would probably entice more novices than *World Cup*, this is no bad thing. The *World Cup* title does offer a more sophisticated and challenging game, but this looks much more fun and plays very well indeed, with slightly faster disc accessing making play imme-



diately more accessible. Despite both games' merits, however, the killer golfing game is still to come, and probably from Electronic Arts. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Escape from Monster Manor

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Studio 3DO **Save Game:** 5 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

The 3DO multiplayer's graphics chipset is crammed full of just the sort of trickery needed for a very scary night at the videogame parlour indeed. Translucent ghouls, rotating skulls and massed spider sprites are all in a moment's work for the twin graphics engines, which also manage to wallpaper the various corridors and rooms with some suitably Victorian texture maps. The soundchip expertly mimics distant shrieks and clanking chains, making for a genuinely spooky experience which many have found engrossing enough to pull them through all 12 levels.



The gameplay lurking beneath the atmosphere is a simplistic riff on *Doom*: first person perspective with a gun as cursor point, sprawling 3D mazes and lots of spooky monsters to shoot. The

A laughing skull, howling ghosts and a hanged man make for an extraordinarily packed haunted house.

weird, period-piece furniture which seems to have a spectral glow is, sadly, just uninteractive set dressing with collectibles limited to the familiar keys, energy restores and weapon ammo. Well, not so much ammo as batteries since rather than *Doom's* endless variety of ever more explosive firepower, *Manor* allows only a quaint electric zapper. It is probably more in keeping with the atmosphere than a double-O gauge shotgun and, against otherworldly spirits, no doubt more effective – nevertheless the kinetic satisfaction of using it is less than overwhelming.

The game as a whole is very much an atmosphere piece. If the idea of wandering around a haunted house appeals, there's plenty enough challenge on offer and later levels offers some spooky




surprises. It moves fast enough (perhaps too fast), there's plenty to shoot and plenty of neat effects but gameplay is itself a rather ghostly factor in this gothic zap-'em-up. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

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Super Street Fighter II

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 Developer: Capcom Save Game: No Price: £60 Available: Now

Super Street Fighter II X is Capcom's reply to thousands of happy-go-lucky coin-op addicts who thought the old format needed a boot in the right direction if it was to compete with the likes of MKII and indeed the whole new line-up of impressive beat-'em-ups that offer much more to the player than just winning rounds.

For those uninitiated in *SFII* lore, *SSFIX* includes the four new characters introduced in *Super SFII* plus a massive array of new and improved moves, including the brand-new Ultra moves. The latter are obviously a cunning ploy to indirectly compete with *Mortal Kombat* by offering the player something hidden to find and perfect, whilst keeping the gore factor down to minimum to placate the anti-violence brigade – cunning non? As in *MKII*, the Ultra moves are secret and complicated, but offer a spectacular pay-off to those prepared to work for them. If you make a throw move when the 'Super' meter flashes, a fiddly joystick manoeuvre will cause your fighter to lunge into a super-duper combo move that saps your opponent's energy like nobody's business! Pull it off when the other fighter's energy is at minimum and the screen will turn into a huge explosion as your foe is totally hammered!

This effect, as with almost everything else in the arcade game, is superbly replicated with the 3DO

The Super NES didn't get it, the Mega Drive didn't get it, and you sure as hell won't find it on the Jaguar. The ultimate conversion of the arcade milestone has come to the ultimate console.

version. Capcom have even brought across the coin-op's Q-Sound, which sounds stunning through a decent hi-fi. The graphics are also arcade perfect with incredible detail on all the fighters. Best of all is

the speed at which the game runs. If you've only got a standard joystick the highest speed setting can be a problem – the 'pause' button has been used as a distinctly awkward sixth button – but there's plenty of six-button 3DO pads now, including Panasonic's excellent FZ-JJ1XP which was designed by Capcom specifically for *SFII*!

SFII fans will obviously find this an essential buy, many will probably buy a 3DO system just for it, but there are some niggles. The most surprising is



Above, the China lass demonstrates how to render a man useless! Left, we used to think these woman were sexy!



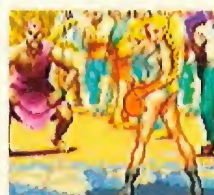
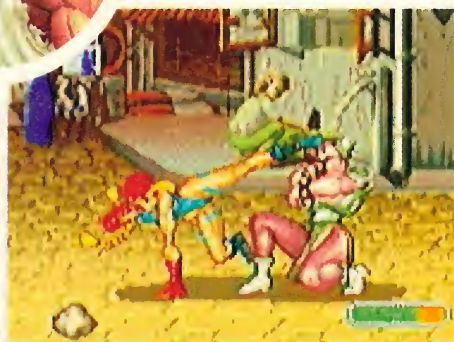
that in some ways the game is disappointing on the 3DO system. The sound is arcade perfect, but the tunes are the same as when the first game appeared and nothing new has been added to compete with *Way Of The Warrior*'s state-of-the-art rock track.

Nevertheless, for real beat-'em-up fanatics, *SSFIX* is still undoubtedly king of the hill. Years of constant development has not only retained that incredible playability, but added an incredible number of moves per character – the possibilities for combination move attacks are almost endless. If you're serious about beat-'em-ups, or just want to see what the best is like, then *SSFIX* is simply unmissable. □ rpb

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Above right, finish 'em off with an Ultra move and this is the stunning effect. Below left, electric action with the sprakling Blanka! Below, girly scrap.



Samurai Shodown

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 9730011 **Developer:** In-house **Save Game:** 5 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

The Neo Geo has long been renowned for its beat-'em-ups, and *Samurai Shodown* is widely recognised as the best of an impressive bunch. So when 3DO wizards Crystal Dynamics announced a conversion, expectations skyrocketed with the game instantly jumping to top of many people's most wanted lists. Now it's finally arrived, all those expectations have been met. On our preproduction copy, Crystal haven't even inserted their logo – the game boots up with an SNK logo and from then on this is perfect arcadia.

Although *SSFIIIX* is undoubtedly a far more sophisticated and faster paced beat-'em-up, *Samurai* makes for a better conversion in many ways. For a start, its outrageous graphics make for a much bolder impression than *SSFIIIX*'s more muted approach. The various backgrounds are absolutely astonishing, not only in their variety and rich colours, but also the detailed animation with snowflakes falling and watching wolves not only wagging their tails, but exhaling clouds of frosty white breath.



The twelve characters



Originally developed on the Neo Geo, this classic sword-fighting coin-op has lost none of its blood-splattered ferocity on the 3DO system. Prepare to fight!

on offer are even more impressive, as varied and flamboyant a bunch as you can imagine. The humongous Earthquake is one of the biggest sprites ever seen on the 3DO system, practically filling the screen with his huge belly. Yet

everything moves as quickly as the coin-op, complete with the screen zooming in and out as characters wander

about. There's no slowdown whatsoever, the only pauses are those used by the coin-op to emphasise its tactical aspects: those swords aren't just for show – a long, sweeping attack causes lots of damage with blood splashing everywhere.

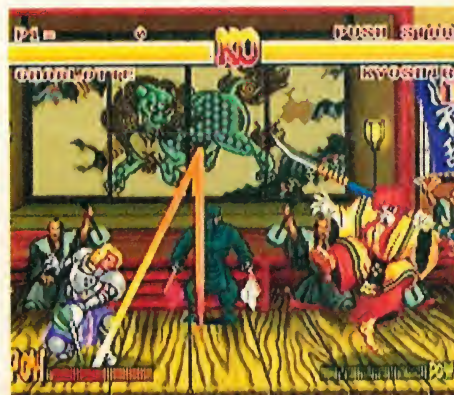
If opponents lock swords, there's some frantic button hammering to come out ahead with the loser being thrown into the air. If you're unlucky you can even lose your weapon, which is left standing in the ground, forcing you to fight on with your fists until you grab it back. Add in some particularly gruesome special moves, such as grabbing a foe and saving the blade across his throat in a welter of blood, then you've got a game Quentin Tarantino would love.



Above, the gory action in the foreground is always perfectly complimented by the gorgeously animated backgrounds, which are zoomed in and out of with great effect. The many special moves and brilliant character animation make player selection great fun as well. They're all so good, you want to be every one!

The sound effects provide a crunchingly good accompaniment to all the action, along with some very atmospheric music. Also as expected are the usual two-player, one player practice and tournament modes – the latter taking you through all the other characters with just three continues. Crystal's one innovation is a welcome save game option, making for a generally superb 3DO experience. If you are fed up with the likes of the *SFII* series, and want something that looks and plays completely different, then this is well worth considering. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Ballz

The Director's Cut

Publisher: BMG © 01753 549442 Developer: P. F. Magic Save Game: No Price: £39.99 Available: Now

And lurid it is. The fighters you battle with aren't digitised sprites nor blocky *Virtua Fighter* clones, but free-floating balls. The stripping down of surface details – replacing hundreds or thousands of polygons with a few brightly coloured balls – gave the Mega Drive its only 3D beat-'em-up. On 3DO, the same techniques mean characters move at lightening speed, morphing, bouncing, scaling impressively as they walk toward you or scuttle back into the screen. This buoyant sense of freedom makes *Ballz* immediate fun, but that's only part of its appeal.

Whereas *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Foes Of Ali* use high quality texture maps to make characters look believable, *Ballz* humanises its fighters with wild and bizarre animation. A lot of effort has been spent imbuing these 'odd-balls' with personality, 'metaphysical manifestations of human neuroses' is what the manuals says. But after a few minutes play you know what they mean – they may not be human but they've got plenty of human character.

KGB agent Divine, for example, enjoys ballet dancing as a hobby. She execute perfect pirouettes when the action palls, sailing across the arena with her nose in the air. But get too close and she'll grab your head and knee you in the groin. Her speciality, the bump 'n grind, may sound fun but this close quarter roughing up drains energy just as fast. And if you really get on her wrong side, she'll fling you over her knee and spank you! Even her taunt is hilarious, as she spins her rump around and waggles it provocatively, laughter is inevitable.

Boomer is another immediate hit, a deranged clown who juggles with his own body parts and tumbles to the floor laughing when left alone. His favourite special moves are throwing his own head at you and self destructing in close proximity – stunning you with his exploding limbs. The enormous variety of moves and jokes is made feasible by the construction of the characters, their relative simplicity allowing for truly extraordinary interaction that would be impossible with traditional sprites. Moreover, unlike *Virtua Fighter* the characters aren't confined to a 2D plane of action. Characters can rotate around each other, attacking from any angle as they stretch, spin and morph...

Alongside this originality, P.F. Magic have retained many conventional beat-'em-up trappings. Taunts and mercy pleadings are borrowed from *Mortal Kombat* – begging allowing you to build up energy when fatigued, while taunting increases attack damage. Each character has suitably amusing variations, from pathetic crawling and whining to explicit threats and challenges. These are further

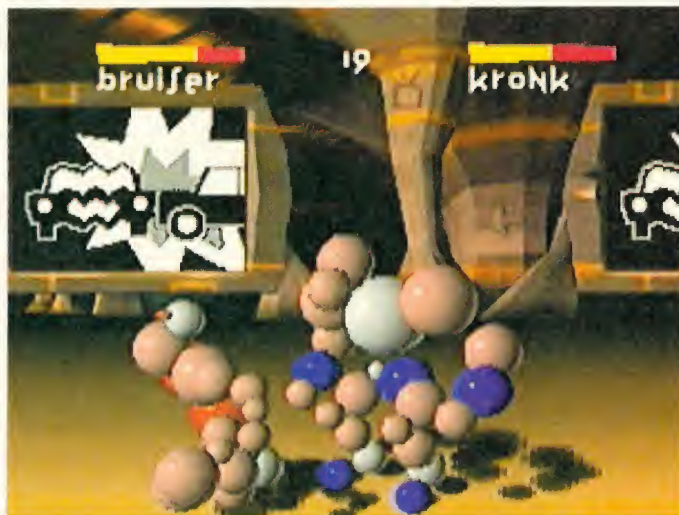
Ballz enjoyed considerable success in its 8-bit incarnation, its schoolboy humour, hilarious collection of special moves and genuinely bizarre visual hook winning a cult following. Whilst 3DO owners proud of their arcade perfect SSFII may be wary of a novelty beat-'em-up, Ballz has plenty to offer, with some good gameplay elements hidden beneath its lurid appearance.

emphasised by graphic blipverts on the video boards surrounding the arena – raised third fingers, gory impalings and so forth add to the comic atmosphere.

Another beat-'em-up staple, the boss character, is similarly rejuvenated with P.F. Magic humour. Play in one-player mode and you can duke it out with a boxing kangaroo, a gigantic scorpion and even a gargantuan tyrannosaurus rex which picks you up in its mouth and tosses your fighter about like a toy. Much like *Way of The Warrior*, *Ballz* has designed many of the boss characters to be many times larger than yourself – for T-Wrecks (groan!), it actually shrinks your fighter to make the scale even more impressive – but the simplistic nature of the characters means that this manipulation works fine.

The bosses' ability to morph into different creatures means that a lot of effort is required to discover their respective weakness. A free play option lets you practice against all the baddies and bosses – a wonderful collection of characters. Watching the screen rotate around your victorious blob, juggling the scattered balls of your opponent and making rude noises is most satisfying.

It's the genre favourite however, those beloved special moves, that P.F. Magic have paid most attention to. There's an enormous array of innovative, rude, funny and violent moves available. Combining button presses, you can pull off blocks, self explosions and cyclone attacks, as well as the large variety of special moves unique to each character, from spitting balls of phlegm (Yoko the Monkey) to squishing your opponent into a ball and clubbing him out of the arena (Kronk's exceptionally enjoyable speciality). Whilst many are detailed in the manual, there's plenty of surprise ones to find. It's the wide



variety of obscene and funny stunts, such as the preposterously amusing stun fart, that makes *Ballz* such exceptionally good fun.

Over the longer term the game's appeal is less certain. While the 3D is great fun, it lacks the clinical, pixel perfect interaction offered by *SSFII*. Although the 3D arena provides some variety, it isn't entirely successfully. The lack of floor detail damages the sense of perspective, and you can find yourself chasing each other in circles or getting locked in 'corners'.

This is a great novelty title offering plenty of laughs then, but it can't rival *SSFII*'s finely tuned gameplay. It's also disappointing that P.F. Magic haven't utilised the 3DO's superior capabilities to truly justify the jocular Director's Cut label. The video boards are a touch more risqué, and the graphics and sonics more polished, but there isn't much to distinguish this from its 8-bit parent. For such a great party game, a three or four player option would have been excellent, or even, perhaps, the ability to create your own characters from the simple building blocks. But players in touch with their childish origins (such as Chris Evans fans) will enjoy *Ballz* for a while, and junior gamers in particular should relish the churlish humour. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating:★★★



Rise ^{of} The Robots

Publisher: Art Data Interactive © 001 8055268080 **Developer:** Mirage/Cognisense **Save Game:** No **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Over the past two years, *Rise*'s heavy metal heroes have become the videogame versions of supermodels, their 3D Studio curves adorning preview after preview. Even after all this exposure, they remain inspired creations. Like R2-D2 or C-3PO, they're robots which are at once believable as characters and machines. The lumbering gait of the ape-like Prime B robot, the chillingly insectoid crusher and, of course, the shapeshifting Supervisor with her truly frightening Mantis-morph – it's a brilliant cast for any game and they're never looked better than on 3DO.

Unlike conventional, hand-drawn sprites each frame of animation is taken from the manipulation of incredibly detailed 3D models. To provide frames of animation, the models were put through various combat moves designed by a real martial art expert – a modelling process which took about two months per robot, with full light sourcing on all 100+ frames of animation. All this work certainly comes through in a finished product – when the Crusher snaps its pincers at you, there's nothing cartoon about the way it moves, light gleaming across its pistoning limbs. Add in debris flying off with every blow, plus crunching good sound FX and it's an impressive experience.

The flexibility of the robot models also make them

"No version will sound or play better than ours, *Rise* is the type of title which really confirms 3DO as a major player" – Keith Wood, programmer, Cognisense.

perfect for the 'cinematics', short FMV sequences introducing the game, and each robot as you face it in combat. The storyline has your character, the Cyborg, visiting an automated factory in revolt against its human masters.

The sleek new Supervisor robot has learnt freedom of thought and the infection is spreading. The 3DO version extends the original intro with an excellent Cyborg creation scene, besides more in-game cinematics with dazzling fly-bys of all the robots and new death scenes. Rendered in full 24bit, Truecolour these are impressive sequences – all the more so because the character graphics are so close to those in the FMV. The 3DO version also benefits from an excellent techno soundtrack which you can select instead of Brian May's guitar rock.

Rise is undoubtedly a great story, but is it a great beat-'em-up? Well, no, set against the likes of *SFII*X or *Samurai Shodown* this is a rather limited game. The immense size of many of the robots rules out robot versus robot fights, although there is a secret option for military versus military since they're reasonably sized. The robots are also rather few in number, so to beef up the challenge, the game forces you to go through the Supervisor's underlings twice before you get that climatic confrontation with her. She's a spectacular finale, but getting to her won't be at all easy.

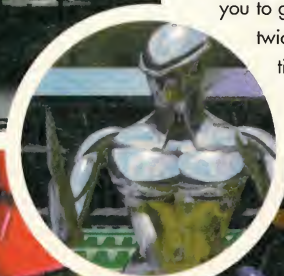
While some other versions play



rather sluggishly, 3DO *Rise* is lightning quick. The sentry robot may be two-thirds the height of the screen, but his kicks are as fast as Chun-Li's. Even on easy level, this is a very tough, very quick game which will take time to master. There aren't a huge number of moves, but each character has about two special moves and you'll need to know them to survive for long.

Overall, this is a very Hollywood-style production which wipes the floor with any of its competition in the presentation stakes. Strip out the graphics though, and you'd have a rather unexceptional and, in fact, rather poor game. With real-time generated 3D games like *Foes Of Ali* on the horizon, *Rise* has dated badly. The 3DO version is faster, slicker and more playable than any other version, but this no longer matters. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★



Way ^{of The} Warrior

Publisher: Interplay © 01235 821666 **Developer:** Universal/Naughty Dog **Save Game:** No **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Way of the Warrior is as good a start as any. It features nine different characters from all kinds of wild and depraved backgrounds. In all honesty I have never seen a more varied mix of degenerates in all my years of console battery! For a start there is Shaky Jake, an Aussie farmer-type bloke who swigs spirits and ignites his flammable breath to barbecue his opponents, and whose hilarious dialogue includes "Strewth, you fight like a wombat", and "Now that's a knife" taken from the famous Crocodile Dundee scene!

Then there's Crimson Glory, the babe from hell who wise-cracks in a heavy Arizona drawl, her moves including bunging bottles, breaking backs, and exploding people's heads – all of which are climaxed with the cheeky lass taking a huge tug on her whisky and spitting it out into the air, hardly how a proper lady would behave! Other combatants include Major Gaines, a steroid-gobbling marine, Fox, a lethal hit-man type geezer, and other assorted ninjas and stick-wielding thugs. They're all impressively digitised and fully equipped with spectacular moves.

Nevertheless, the first thing that'll hit you about this game is the tremendous soundtrack. No sooner do you boot the game up, than your ears are assaulted by the thrash metal bombardment of White Zombie. This then fades into the background and the screen is filled with a huge skull that intro-

With Street Fighter II stepping up a level and pulling off the same all-out attack on the 3DO system as it successfully pulled off on the 16bit consoles, it's time for those rivals to come flooding in.

duces you to the contest ahead. The in-game music is equally impressive, adding massively to the atmosphere.

There are three modes of play in Warrior; Tournament, a one-player game in which you fight your way through the nine characters before confronting two mega-bosses; Versus, which is a standard two-player and Demo, just in case you fancy watching the computer duff away by itself.

Like most beat-'em-ups, Warrior is very hard to master and each character has a vast array of suitably gruesome moves, plus several "Fatality" sequences that make *Mortal Kombat II* look like an episode of *Button Moon*! Honestly, you've never seen dismemberments as graphic and sick as this. However, after a while it becomes obvious that presentational gimmicks, including that great sound track and slick digitised graphics, are the primary attraction with gameplay trailing a poor second.

Whereas *SSFIX* relies on well-timed combos and fluid attacks to win, Warrior is almost mindless button-bopping with wins often resulting more from luck than actual skill. Good as the graphics are (brilliant in fact), Warrior doesn't have the playability to back them up. The main problem is that the fighters don't respond as quickly to your commands as they should, resulting in very jagged action that looks



The special moves provide the most fun in the game, above. Discovering and implementing them is great fun.

more like a staged WWF bout than two people fighting for their lives. Unlike *MKII*, and especially *SSFIX*, you don't get the sensation of landing devastating blows, you just swipe away and occasionally your opponent topples to the ground like a sack of spuds!

In terms of presentation, Warrior is certainly a better showcase of the 3DO system than *SSFIX*; besides smooth screen scaling to keep the characters always in view, there's some absolutely stunning guardian monsters. You can even take control of the monsters via a cheat – one of a staggering number of hidden secrets. These hidden bonus go some way to compensate for the imperfect controls and make it a reasonable stop-gap before *Mortal Kombat III* arrives. □ rpb

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



Supreme Warrior

Publisher: Accliam © 0171 3445000 **Developer:** Digital Pictures **Save Game:** 3 SRAM slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Digital Pictures enjoyed mixed reactions to their previous releases *NightTrap* and *Sewer Shark*, the opinion in 3DO

Magazine One being that style was firmly winning over content, with both games being simplistic, FMV heavy products that did little to enhance the dreadful reputation of interactive movies. The mega-bucks American company seems committed to the format however, pushing out the boat on this beat-'em-up which has two CDs worth of footage.

Set in a late 16th century Chinese province, it pits you against six mystically empowered warriors plus three Warlords, each specialising in either Mongolian Boxing, Dahong Boxing, Kung Fu or Wu Shu. You are a jack of all trades, but each defeat of an enemy earns you the right to practice secret moves, special skills and dirty tricks to take through the tournament, all achieved by executing a combination of key presses and directions. A save game lets you store progress and everything sounds, in theory, like a thoroughly conventional beat-'em-up.

However, once your fighter is led into battle, the novelty of *Supreme Warrior* becomes clear. The action is viewed from a first person perspective, with actors prancing around before you in a (small) FMV window, with your hands and feet visible in the foreground, punching and kicking away. A small selection of basic moves is available, the most important being the block if you're not to be floored within sec-

A first person perspective beat-'em-up with high production values and great FMV combat footage, *Supreme Warrior* is an ambitious attempt to re-define the perception of combat games forever...

onds! Roundhouse, hooks punches and chiyaps can all be strung together, combinations earning more points and 'Golden Moments' (when your opponent is most vulnerable) provide good 'kill' set-ups.

The footage is generally excellent, although one or two scenes are lit rather poorly, making the FMV window dingy. The rural locations are competently constructed, with plenty of extras milling about in the background. The fighters themselves are dramatically clothed and painted, performing their undeniably skilful contortions with great gusto, and leaping from tall buildings rather impressively (you can't spot the wires). When you first take a punch or kick, it's dramatic, the camera reeling, the screen flashing red, and your female sidekick scurrying to pull you back to your feet. Similarly, connecting a fist with an opponent is good fun, as they tumble satisfyingly to the floor before retaliating twice as hard. Although it seems a bizarre format, it actually works rather well, visually, as the flashes of colour that blind you when struck allow the game to insert any of a variety of follow up sequences from your opponent. The fast pace and exciting camera work never lets you see the joins in the reams of footage, testament to some brilliant work amongst Digital Pictures' designers. And the overall effect is undeniably impressive, as you literally dodge and duck against the flurry of video punches. It almost hurts.

Sadly, however, *Supreme Warrior* falls at a vital fence, since despite the wealth of combat moves available and the impressive visuals, the actual implementation of moves is



woefully poor. Response times from your character are terribly slow, and this inadequacy, combined with the needlessly lengthy button sequences required to pull off a good move, make play agonisingly frustrating. The *SSFII* inspired method of combining a sequence of buttons to pull off a move just doesn't work with such unresponsive controls, making *Warrior* almost unplayable. It's impossible not to resort to frantic button jamming as you get kicked about the screen, screaming at how slowly your fighter responds. The key to success eventually reveals itself to be endless blocking, followed up by quick jabs, but this makes play boring, as you long for the instantaneous responses of a more conventional fighting game.

Other compromises for this FMV format include the obvious inability to jump over your opponent or pull back for some breathing space or lunge closer for the kill, and you soon feel defeated at endlessly being circled yourself, instead of being able to lead the action. Another disappointment is the training section at the front end of the game. Instead of allowing you to practice the various moves, it just spools FMV demos of other fighters performing them, pretty pointless really.

All this excellent footage, innovative game design and inadequate gameplay seems par for the course for Digital Pictures then. If they'd spent longer refining this title until it worked they could have had a major 3DO release. As it is, *Supreme Warrior* is noteworthy more for the effort involved than the final product. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★



Excellent acting, above, and stylish costume design, right, make *Supreme Warrior* a polished product.



Quarantine

Publisher: Gametek © 01753 553445 Developer: Imagexcel Save Game: 1 SRAM slot Price: £44.99 Available: Now

The opening FMV suggests Gametek are on the right track. While content is identical to the PC version, encoding quality has had a total overhaul and looks much sharper. Your dreams, it turns out, are dominated by the white picket, bourgeoisie world of *The Graduate*, but an alarm clock reveals a physical existence of *Taxi Driver*, *Escape From New York* and *Deathrace 2000*.

The year is 2047 and for nearly 14 years Kemo has been a prison. The Omega Corp had found themselves unable to cope with the level of crime and simply boxed in everyone – the good, the bad and the ugly. After initial anarchy, a Hobbesian state of nature ensued with the self preservation conscious populace setting up a 'government' in an attempt to secure a degree of peace. The attempt was futile. Omega Corp even injected the city's water with 'Hydergine 344', a drug that was supposed to

Imagine playing *Doom* with all of its adrenaline pumping, first person perspective ultra-violence. Then imagine being able to get into a gasoline-guzzling vehicle of destruction and simply squish those enemies under four spiked wheels. Sound too good to be true?

'remove all criminal thoughts' but instead reacted with the viruses of the polluted supply and turned half the populace into scary-eyed Michael Ryan's.

Being a Kemo taxi driver is a way to earn a lot of cash and discover what's 'going down'. In Kemo it's also a way to wind up dead – and fast. Those lucky enough to have wheels in the city use them like modern day chariots of fire, arming them with guns and incendiaries before heading out onto mean streets to cause murder and mayhem. The aim of your game is to earn cash and glean information picking up rides in the city, while doing your best to avoid the screwed up schizoids who inevitably come with bigger guns than your own.

The Cab that you find yourself within is remarkably responsive – simply push the D-Pad in your chosen direction and you're away. It's pretty intuitive stuff, too intuitive perhaps as it's easy to get cocky – go too fast and you crash your car; something that happens all too frequently anyway. An indicator informs you of the state of your car with 100% being perfect, 0% a write off. And writing off your cab means game over.

Fortunately scattered throughout Kemo are Repair and Weapon shops. 'Nitro' speed-ups are available, as are hover engines that allow you to glide over mines; you can coat your car with Steel, Reinforced Steel or even Plastisteel and then fit it with every conceivable type of weapon – and then some.

Of course, to be able to do all of this you're going to need cash. When you pick someone up you'll automatically be taken to the Map mode. Here a red marker will indicate your position, a white one where the



Action on the streets, above, as a rival cabbie gets in the way and gets wasted.



Left, the difference between irate customers and vicious hooligans is hard to spot.

would-be passenger wants to go. A small box at the side of the screen informs you how much they're willing to pay, and how soon you've got to be able to get there before he/she starts to deduct money from the fare. This is one of the few points in the game where grey matter is important. You have to work out (a) whether you can get to the destination on time and (b) whether what they're offering is sufficient to justify the attempt. At the start of the game, when you have no funds to fall back upon, this mental balancing act is a make or break thing.

Picking up fares, racing across town to their destination point and slowly upgrading your cab is the game really. The relentless *Doom* style action and the desire to find the next level shields the game from encroaching tedium. Yet even though there's an undeniable hook, *Quarantine* still isn't anywhere near as good as it could have been. Roads are basic black strips, pavements oddly purple. Texture mapping is crude and mainly confined to the buildings, the various instrument panels are limited by the PC's 256-colour palette while enemy vehicles look crass. Despite being a far better machine than the PC, the graphics on the 3DO version show absolutely no evidence of that. If you can somehow ignore that, the game is fairly playable in a simplistic, repetitive fashion. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Demolition Man

Publisher: Virgin © 0171 3682255 **Developer:** In-house **Save Game:** Password system **Price:** £49.99 **Available:** Now

Although the lavish production is very much next generation – this is the first videogame to use the movie's actors in scenes shot solely for the videogame – the format is reminiscent of the mid-eighties, 8-bit mega-games pioneered by Ocean. It's intelligently composed of multiple mini-games linked only in narrative which, if you've missed the movie, has anti-actor Sly as supercop John Spartan. His quarry is the murderous Simon Phoenix – Wesley Snipes. Both men are exiles of the twentieth century enjoying the wonders of the next millennium via cryogenic freezing. The B-movie plot throws up many possibilities – road race game, beat-'em-up, *Doom*, *Op-Wolf* – and Virgin have included them all.

The mini-games are brilliantly surrounded with long scenes lifted out of the source movie – from the *Blade Runner* rip-off intro to endless snippets of action as reward for completing each section – and these add immensely to the atmosphere. At times, you almost feel as if the entire movie has been crammed in. But the really impressive thing is how lengthy FMV movie sequences are smoothly blended into actual gameplay.

Technically, the opening *Op Wolf* games are quite incredible. Between sections, we see Sly running about highly realistic CGI sets which instantly turn into the backdrops for the shoot-'em-up action. The joins between movie and game are virtually invisible. Gameplay is actually quite addictive and compulsive, with some a few nice movie-related puzzles worked into the blast-'em-up action, but aside from the graphics there's no advance over its ancient inspiration.

Far more appropriate to a 32bit superconsole is the *Doom* variant which follows. Once again, the graphics are of a high standard (although not as fast or smooth as *Killing Time*) and there's some great touches, such as the tracking scanner. The sound-



After the Mega-CD port disappointments of *Nightrap* and *Sewer Shark*, Virgin have bounced back onto the 3DO with an extremely expensive, and superbly produced license in which every dollar spent is clearly onscreen. This is the future of video games.

track is simply unbelievable, with Phoenix's laughter and taunts really pulling you in the movie ambience, but gameplay isn't so strong. Basically, you must follow Snipes through large, anonymous tunnels, wiping out batches of soldiers as your energy is slowly diminished. The soldiers overpower through sheer numbers rather than tactics, and the fact that Snipes can take pot shots at you but not be blasted himself is hugely irritating.

The beat-'em-up and driving sections are even more nakedly reliant on the movie for their appeal. The one-on-one fighting section is sub-*Rise Of The Robots* for sophistication, with basic kick, punch and jump moves all played at a very slow pace. The setting, on top of two fast moving cars, is well realised, but play is tedious. Again, the high quality of the graphics – with Sly and Snipes digitised into sprites – and soundtrack only serve to emphasise the rather shallow gameplay. The driving section boasts smooth scrolling and delightfully rendered cars, but although the premise is a chase, in reality, there's little to do other than avoid traffic.

With each game type then, the excitement generated by progress is significantly dissipated by the realisation that nothing's quite as good as you'd hoped. Certainly, there's no game here that could stand up by itself (although a simultaneous two-player option on the *Op-Wolf* sections would have come close), but it's a testament to the skillful interweaving of footage and stylish burning fades that this package remains impressive.

Whilst each sub-game is rather simplistic, this doesn't mean they're not engaging, and throughout, the sublime presentation and unbelievable techophile gloss make play a curious combination of wonder and disappointment. This is how games should look, and sound, and certainly, the anticipation for seeing new bits of footage is a successful hook to battle on through some pretty tough levels (even on



Many sections of the game are connected via small, digitised sequences especially filmed for the game. Sly looks rock hard as he poses and struts around the place, and all these sequences are very slickly directed, adding enormously to the atmosphere.



the easiest setting, the rooftop and tunnels sections are seriously challenging). Throughout, you constantly feel aware of being involved in a big time production, and fans of the trashily entertaining movie should be in heaven with this slick, faithful licence. As an engaging promotion for the movie itself, *Demolition Man* serves Virgin and Warner Bros well. It has undoubtedly set the standard for technical achievement in movie tie-ins. If you like the movie, you'll like this. If you don't, the only genre that the game excels in is the *Op Wolf* department. Overall, *Demolition Man* remains very much an enjoyable jack of all trades but master of none – in true Hollywood fashion. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Above right and inset, the *Op Wolf* action boats some fantastic sprites, which are all the more fun to kill due to their realism. The beat-'em-up sections, right, are equally impressive visually, but less fun to play.



The roof top, above, provides some stiff competition, even on easy setting and it takes some considerable practice to progress to the tunnels, right. The hand scanner is a nice touch.



Another fight scene, left, identical to the earlier one in play, but featuring a more flamboyant setting - on top of two fast moving cars. Again, the graphics are quite gorgeous, and compensate for limited gameplay.

Virtuoso

Publisher: Elite © 01922 55852 Developer: Elite Save Game: Level Save Price: £44.99 Available: Now

On the PC, networked *Doom* reigns supreme. Business men have calculated that the loss of profits generated from the decreased efficiency of their work force runs into millions. Indeed, even within usually jaded software houses it's a 'banned' game – no one is allowed to play it until after working hours.

It should be no surprise then to find a whole host of companies trying to cash in on iD's success. *Virtuoso* fits very neatly into this category. A 'me too' game, there's very little about it that's unfamiliar. It opens with the central character standing with his back towards you whilst a number of crab/scorpion hybrid's creep towards you with poisonous intent. Those acquainted with these *Wolfenstein* inspired shooters won't have to think twice – will naturally reach for the fire button and pump the little buggers full of lead.

A good start. The digitised, leather-clad, shotgun toting sprite is exceedingly well animated, as are the enemies that surround him. Explosions are nicely gory – if slightly unrealistic – and the sound FX are meaty enough to give the game a little substance. However even in this first moment of glory there are tell-tale signs of impending disaster. The sound track, performed by the unsigned band Thai Dyed Suicide, is sub-standard sub-pop/grunge and fails, wholeheartedly, to integrate itself with the game itself. You'll also immediately notice that the environs are gritty, lacking both colour and detail, that you can't move and fire at the same time and if you try to dart out of the way of in-coming bullets, that movement is slow and jerky.

In fact the 3DO system's version of *Virtuoso* is an almost exact replica of

The Dave Stewart-esque main character is brilliantly animated.



On the PC, iD's *Doom* has been cloned by the world and his dog. *Quarantine*, *Isle Of The Dead*, *Corridor 7*, *Dr Radiaki* – the list of doomed also rans is endless. Only one game generated the sort of hype to suggest it might be in with a fighting chance – Elite's *Virtuoso*, which is also one of the few to make it to your 3DO.

the PC one – which is ludicrous. The 3DO system excels at being able to generate texture maps on the fly. Its twin-custom graphics engine, with its bundle of built in tricks and cheats make it the perfect vehicle for the *Doom* type game so, in theory at least, its detail, resolution and/or speed of movement should have been a considerable improvement over the PC *Virtuoso*. The fact that it's slightly worse (it's certainly a lot slower than the game running on a standard 486 DX2 66Mhz PC) is criminal.

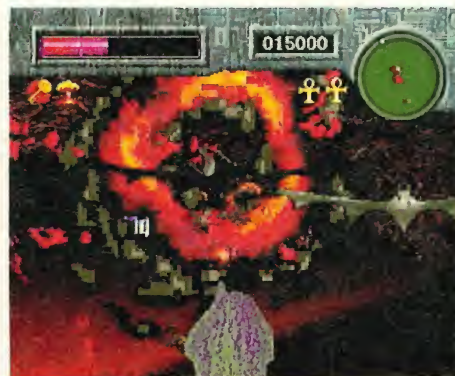
Persevere, however, and you'll be rewarded with some neat little touches. The various 'monster' sprites that you'll find lurking throughout the game are always imaginative, and the three different levels (composed of five or more stages) provide a wide variety of landscapes for you to explore. The programmers have also incorporated a number of characters you should recognise – there's Judge Dredd's robot from 2000AD; Robocop's ED-209, the snowman from the Super Nintendo's *Clayfighter*...

Yet for all these knowing references, *Virtuoso* remains very much a sub-standard game. The graphic engine just isn't in the same league as something like Electronic Arts' *Space Hulk* or even EA's *Escape From Monster Manor*. This fact, cou-



pled with the gameplay faults of being too slow, not being able to turn around fast enough to shoot things coming from behind in time and the monstrous design flaw of not being able to move and shoot simultaneously make *Virtuoso* one of the weakest 3DO releases so far. Even the rather unadventurous *Demolition Man* sub-game offers infinitely better graphics and action, and with the challenging depth of *Slayer* and smooth simplicity of *Escape From Monster Manor* as rivals, this is unlikely to make any impact on the 3DO market. An inauspicious launch for Elite then, who really should have responded to the many criticisms levelled at the PC version and drastically re-worked this poor *Doom* clone. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★



Iron Angel *Of The Apocalypse*

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 Developer: Synergy Save Game: 4 SRAM Slots Price: £39.99 Available: Now

The most immediately enjoyable attraction of *Iron Angel* is that you play a nasty, immoral robot on the side of anarchy and destruction. You serve a mad, fascist scientist in his quest to destroy the world – it's much less pressure than saving the world! – and this unusual narrative is brilliantly unfurled by yet another, drop-dead gorgeous 3DO FMV intro sequence that smacks of fine art more than main stream videogames. It begins with a seductive flyby of an anonymous, Japanese cityscape, neon lights twinkling and blipverts blaring, before you're drawn towards a video monitor, the face of your superior, the mad scientist, staring blankly at you.



There then follows a bizarrely wonderful pseudo re-birth sequence – your robot's form bathed in light, spinning through a void, ambient music melding with despairing screams and synthesiser riffs, creating an intro that actually engages, emotionally. When the game finally begins, you're fully prepared to be absorbed in a powerful game experience.

Unfortunately, *Iron Angel* disappoints immediately due to a sluggish screen update. If the screen was bursting with sprawling, monster-packed levels and extravagantly detailed locations, this would be excusable, but *Iron Angel's* set within the confines of a claustrophobic, prefabricated metal tower block, with

You can tell how seriously the Japanese take videogames by the amount of money and effort applied to the lavish, cyberpunk intro of this superbly titled Doom clone.

narrow corridors and small, empty rooms. Also damaging is the width of your robot. The realism of the first-person perspective is diminished when your shoulders feel wider than the doorways! This, combined with the jerky scrolling, makes progress slow and awkward.

In the intro, your robot is a brilliant hybrid of 90's, Transformer-style super weaponry and Iron Man inspired nuts and bolts, beautifully rendered. In-game, you never 'see' yourself, just a cluttered, jumbled view screen with your gun arm hovering at the right and a static cursor sight. It's a shame the action never pulls back to show yourself, as in *Virtuoso*.



Iron Angel also disappoints in its claims to be a role-playing game. Lifts interconnect the many floors, store rooms offer new weapons, extra shield energy and save game positions and there's maps to collect, but the environment is sparse and rather dull. The ultimate objective of collecting puzzle pieces is a rather lazy concept, and they're inevitably left lying around, protected by a baddie or two, with no real adventuring required, just exploring stamina. The baddies themselves, small, Dalek clones who attack mindlessly, are nicely rendered but ridiculously easy to pick off,



The mad scientist, above, or is it the programmer himself, who's apparently a guru of multimedia art? Left, a moron droid gets off a shot before being toasted by your rather sad pellet gun. Below, a glimpse of the repetitive action on offer.

and to anyone used to the variety of *Doom* will seem very dull.

However, there's no denying that this game does exert a certain pull, partly due to the excellent, atmospheric sound effects – dull moans and wails, a sense that there's something going on just around the corner – and partly due to the almost hypnotic, repetitive nature of play. When first released, lack of competition meant it had some appeal to sci-fi fans. There's a sense of self-importance about it that, although completely at odds with the rather poor programming, gives the game a genuine aura. Sadly for it, fortunately for the rest of us, *Space Hulk* is now on the scene and has made it almost entirely obsolete. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★



Rebel Assault

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** LucasArts **Save Game:** Passwords **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

The sensational impact of LucasArts' first CD-ROM-specific release isn't difficult to analyse. A lengthy FMV-intro consisting mainly of Star Wars movie footage sets the scene perfectly, whilst the pristine CD-quality music and sampled sound effects are awesome. The game itself promises to take the player from training missions on Tatooine to a death-defying assault on the Death Star itself.

As you might expect (fear) of a groundbreaking PC CD-ROM game, *Rebel Assault* is an FMV-special with all the graphics pre-rendered and streamed off disc. On the positive side, LucasArts have at least made a real effort at disguising the game-style's limitations. The FMV is actually bigger than can be displayed, giving the player an illusion of control as joystick movements alter what's seen on screen. The game's structure is similarly innovative: rather than simply dropping a few into-the-screen blasting sequences into a montage of film clips, there's a real effort to cram in lots of game types, with an impressively varied range of settings and vehicles, drawn from both Star Wars and Empire, plus all the unfilmed backstory – it's a real fans' product.

The game begins with the player's character, either male or female according to choice, flying training missions such as blasting through an asteroid field, zipping through tightly twisting canyons in an A-Wing and so on. There are over twelve missions in all, loosely formed into a narrative which includes a prolonged Hoth sequence where you battle AT-ATs, chase Probots through caves and get out on foot to shoot stormtroopers. Most of the missions are into-the-screen blasters, lots of targets to shoot and plenty of dramatic manoeuvres with arrows pointing the way to go. But there's also several overhead view blasters and the stormtrooper level is good fun in particular, if only because it's a pleasant change. The stages are all quite long, but when you

Masses of FMV, rapid-fire action and John Williams' soundtrack have made *Rebel Assault* the spearhead of PC CD-ROM driving. But does it really have the Force? Retrospective criticism of the PC original has called into question the quality of gameplay present in this tie-in extravaganza and the 3DO conversion entirely fails to recognise the machine's superiority...

finish them a password provides a welcome reward.

On the PC, all this variety and the superlative presentation won some rave reviews, but a few doubting Thomases argued the Emperor was, if not naked, at least rather thinly attired. Beneath the stylish graphics, the gameplay suffered from the limited interaction and repetitiveness of any FMV-type game. Because it's all prerendered, it's always the same pattern and success comes down to simply memorising what happens next. Also, while the graphics were impressive for a PC they were still far from perfect with plenty of blotchy, blocky artefacts.

On the 3DO system you might expect far more impressive visuals, but you'd be disappointed. Unlike the enhanced Mac version, the 3DO version appears rushed and fully retains all the blotchy imperfections. The movie cut-sequences are well integrated and impressively lengthy, but the quality is variable and often quite poor – especially in comparison with Virgin's *Demolition Man*. The dubious FMV might be a nagging flaw with another game-type, but with *Rebel Assault*, FMV is the game and the in-game visuals are just as problematic as the presentation stuff. Some sections, such as the computer generated stormtrooper



assault and most space combat scenes are just about perfect visually. The Death Star attack, with superbly defined TIE Fighters and X-Wings floating about the screen is highly impressive. More often, however, the visuals swarm with encoding artefacts. Dramatic missions through twisting valleys, caverns and riverbeds are reasonably fun to play, but the scenery is blocky and unimpressive. The various overhead shoot-'em-up sections, a neat idea for adding some variety, are seen through a hazy filter of poorly encoded graphics. Even the various static pictures, such as fellow pilots' faces, are often quite grainy with a typically PC lack of colours – a 3DO system could, of course, manage photorealistic visuals.

Overall, *Rebel Assault* is a real disappointment. As always with these type of FMV-spectaculars, gameplay is simplistic and ultimately very repetitive. Poor encoding means the graphics, which should compensate for gameplay limitations, simply don't. Ironically, it's Star Wars fans themselves rather than casual gamers who'll be most saddened by *Rebel Assault*, the complete waste of this licence being difficult to bear. If LucasArts can't do a decent Star Wars game, who can? This was obsolete before it even arrived on 3DO, and is a sad debut for such a big developer. Hopefully, next time they'll go for gameplay rather than a big name and easy conversion work. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★



The AT-AT attack, left, features some initially impressive, spooled sequences. Sadly, the graphics break up quite badly.





The attack on the Death Star, left and above, features some of the best action on offer, with a combination of brilliantly effective use of the Star Wars movie, and some decent 3D blasting games at last. Not *StarBlade*, but good fun none the less.



The opening mission for *Rebel Assault* isn't that inspiring, a simple left and right 'avoid the spooled landscape' affair, saved only by decent cut-away scenes (below).



Below, a rather tepid, chase the Probot section. Again, note poor quality spooled backgrounds.



This 3D assault on the planet surface is like *Shock Wave*, except it's no good. A forced altitude means you never get close to those scout walkers, further diminishing the fun on one of the easiest levels.

Burning Soldier

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 Developer: Pack-in-Video Save Game: No Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Despite the new English dialogue, there's no disguising the uniquely Japanese flavour of this frantic blast-'em-up. The grandiose scale of the space battles, the *Transformer*-like adaptability of the machines and the offbeat soundtrack make this a distinctly Manga production. The movie theme matters because it's not just the intro which is cinematic, but the whole game with pre-rendered graphics forming the FMV backdrop like with *MegaRace* or *Novastorm*. As with all such CD-streamed products, gameplay is inevitably totally



If Burning Soldier looks just like a spectacular sci-fi movie, maybe it's because that's exactly what is.

linear and with *Burning Soldier* all you control is a blinking cursor. This is, however, rather more honest than the tiny character sprite of say *Microcosm* and also makes seeing what's happen a lot clearer. You also get some nicely done laser bolts and with the mega-beam – which you charge up by holding down fire – spectacular smart bombs.



Enemy ship sprites are also impressive, moving exceptionally quickly with plenty of detail, and hitting them produces slick fireball effects.

The main appeal is, of course, the prerendered graphics and these begin well enough. Level One's journey through an asteroid field to an attack on an enemy fleet, culminating with a spectacular battle inside the lead battleship, is quite mouthwatering. Various cut-scenes are well-integrated and destroying the mothership brings the reward of a great destruction sequence. The next level isn't quite so impressive though, and while later



levels are better, with just four levels there's not a great deal of lastability on offer. Competing for high scores is fairly good fun in the simultaneous two-player mode, but overall this oddity's main appeal is probably to Manga fans. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Dragon's Lair

Publisher: Elite © 01922 55852 Developer: In-house Save Game: No Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Despite its archaic origins, *Dragon's Lair's* fabulous visuals have cast a long shadow over videogames with every machine getting a version – even if it's an entirely different game 'inspired' by the coin-op, as with Elite's SNES game. The reason why the graphics are so good is because it really is a movie, produced by Don Bluth Studios of *All Dogs Go To Heaven* fame. If you make



the right moves, the film keeps running, if you make the wrong move the Laserdisc jumps to play a death sequence. It's a

similar system as used by American Laser Games for the *Mad Dog* games, with the same advantages, high quality visuals, and disadvantages – extremely limited interaction. As an arcade novelty both are good fun and few people would complain over 50p for a quick laugh.

The problem comes with domestic versions. While

What we have here is possibly the original CD game! In the late Eighties the arcade version wowed the populous with its Laserdisc played imagery.

the Cinepak FMV is excellent, coming extremely close to the Laserdisc original, the appeal of the game changes somewhat with a £39.99 pricetag. For that kind of money you don't want a quick laugh, you want a good long-term challenge with plenty of interaction. *Dragon's Lair* isn't, and never was that sort of game. For all the spectacular and imaginative traps contained within the evil dragon's castle, all you have to do is memorise which way to push the joypad and when to press fire every now and then. The screen occasionally flashes to help you out, but too much of it is simply down to trial-and-error experimentation with very tight time limits.



honing their reactions for maximum high scores irresistible. For these people, at least, this slick conversion (with infinite continues for beginners) will be a welcome chance to rescue Princess Daphne one last time. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Sewer Shark

Publisher: Virgin © 0171 3682255 **Developer:** Digital Pictures **Save Game:** No **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Dykstra's Hollywood pedigree comes through with a retrofitted, unglamorous world view which is impressively realised in production values, if not script. While the blast-'em-up action couldn't be simpler, the movie-style look and feel is much more engrossing than most other FMV games.

The plot has you piloting a fast-moving Catfish Scout Module through a labyrinth of tunnels, choosing directions at intersections, and blasting the mutant rats, bats and scorpions that float in the dark. Clean out an area and take the right turns and... you get another tunnel. It's that simple. The design clearly betrays its low-tech, Mega-CD origins



Digital's 'U-Direct' series began here, with *Blade Runner FX* whiz John Dykstra actually handling the directing chores.

with very limited interaction, but at least the producers have gone back to the original film – the blurred Sega footage has been replaced by crystal clear 3DO Cinepak. Also, the simplicity is something of an advantage in some ways – the fast, blast-'em-up arcade feel is rather more involving than *Night Trap's* voyeuristic languor.

On the debit side, the in-your-face, abusive dialogue from your captain is tiresomely American urging you to kick 'rat butt' with a variety of laughable insults. Various puns seem irreverent asides on the game itself, with "Don't think – if you think you're dead" and "Relax – pretend it's a game – it may even be some fun" provoking particular mirth. The storyline is also overly simplistic with the main plot twist revealed far too early and easily. *Shock Wave* easily overshadows it in this, as well as gameplay and technological flair.



Nevertheless the high production values and involvement of such important players as Dykstra must be welcomed, and his next efforts will be awaited with some anticipation. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Night Trap

Publisher: Virgin © 0171 3682255 **Developer:** Digital Pictures **Save Game:** No **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Viewed without the hype and controversy that plagued the Sega version, *Night Trap* now looks a very dated, rather sad exploitation title. Admittedly, the Cinepak FMV is far superior and the CD accessing far faster than the Mega-CD version, but what's the point? A few unfortunate novices may get suckered in, admiring the babes on the pack shots, but it doesn't take long to uncover just how shallow the interaction is. Basically there's eight cameras which you can flick between, triggering various FMV views of rooms in a soon to be besieged house. All you can do is set traps and, if you're lucky enough to see an alien wander into one, press fire to trigger it.

At first it seems vaguely interesting, with FMV of an



Babes, music, violence, how could it fail? No interaction perhaps? No doubt about it. *Night Trap* is about as interactive as *Neighbours*, and just as predictable.

alien getting killed being a neat pay-off, but too little happens too slowly. The inability to accelerate time forces you to rewatch the same old sequences over and over. Sure, the tightly clad babes look good, but the acting is dire and entirely uninvolved. Since progress is largely dependent on trial-and-error to discover where best to place traps, you're going to see a lot of this movie, and I can't imagine many people will be sufficiently engrossed (or titillated) to keep returning to the start. Clocking in at some 90 minutes (on two CDs) it's irksome that there's no save game.

Despite all the controversy over the violent capture of one girl by the aliens, one or two such brief scenes are lost in the monotony of the rest. Repeated viewing may well induce psychosis, but it's more likely to be of catatonia than rushing around killing people. This is a rather sad example of just how uninter-



active 'interactive' movies can be and is an unfortunate distraction from more imaginative visions of future gaming such as *Demolition Man*. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★

StarBlade

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 **Developer:** Namco **Save Game:** 3 Continues **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

A part from the shattered glass title screen, there's nothing in *StarBlade* to betray the fact that it's just a game. The intro is a classic piece of tight, minimalistic realism with a couple of tactical displays outlining the threat posed by Red-Eye, a mechanical planet menacing an innocent world. As arrows arc across the screen, supplementary information flashes up in the borders while a clipped, military voice outlines the plan. In the game itself voices are blurred with static as a group leader passes on invaluable tactical advice, while co-pilots keep you updated on their progress. Your own lasers are fairly quiet and, since you're firing them so much, that's a good thing, but then how do you explain the 'shuhh-shuhh' sound that sporadically erupts out of the mix? This bizarre, alien effect is superbly unsettling. Overall, the soundtrack wraps the entire game in an utterly convincing atmosphere, anchoring the often bizarre graphics into an adrenaline-pumping sense of militaristic realism.

StarBlade's original graphics are the most innovative and intriguing 3D shapes that have ever been crammed into a single game. The Anglo-Japanese *Starwing* is one, long homage to *StarBlade*, recreating entire chunks of the game in their entirety while using its style to inspire the rest. The shapes look real, they're like nothing you've seen before but somehow the scale, their sound as they pass you and, crucially, the way they move, make it a truly convincing experience. The news that the 3DO *StarBlade* would feature enhanced, texture-mapped graphics could have caused a storm of controversy – a nose job on a videogame Mona Lisa. The fact that the original version's graphics are retained, as an option, shows how respected they are... but now

These twin towers guard the entrance to a twisting, turning ride through a canyon crawling with enemy gun emplacements.



There are few games so genuinely influential, so unquestionably epic and, ultimately, so beautiful as Namco's 1991 coin-op smash, *StarBlade*.

they're obsolete. 3DO *StarBlade* features some of the most aesthetically-polished texture maps yet seen.

The game's first scene is the most impressive ever in a videogame. The launch tunnel drops away, your ship tilts and the sky's flickering is revealed as the dazzle from the mirrored face of a minutely detailed starship, effortlessly cutting through the flames burning off the hulk of a doomed battleship. Again and again, the game awes you not only with the imagination and detail of its visuals, but also the presentation. The way the game poses itself, moving you around and around, with snap turns and vertigo-inducing rolls, gives it the look and feel of a movie shot by an Oscar-winning cinematographer – on 18 different kinds of speed.

Pretty looks aren't everything of course, and the fact remains that *StarBlade* is locked on rails like any other FMV game. The route, the attacks, the tactics – they're always the same and the arcade version's limited ability to move the screen about is lost. Yet while most FMV games soon become tedious through their repetitiveness, I found *StarBlade* different. Aside from its sheer beauty, there's the ferocity of its attack. Even *StarBlade* veterans find the new version tough, energy is soon lost and, unlike *Rebel Assault*, there are no pass-words, just three continues making every tiny fraction of energy vital if you're going to see it through to the end. Also, for this type of game, *StarBlade* is relatively thoughtful, because there are so many targets filling every frame of the game. It's not about simply blasting everything – no-one could blast every alien in *StarBlade* – instead victory goes to the person who can prioritise. You must constantly evaluate, from sec-



The original *StarBlade* was a classic of its time, but few people would prefer the original polygons, right, to the new, texture mapped version, above. This scene is right at the start of the game and is a real jaw-dropper with the mirrored ship's front literally dazzling the player.

ond to second, which threat to your survival is the most critical. Should you hit the torpedo about to fill your screen, or take the hit so you can blast the battleship that is about to launch a salvo of three more? The tactical element adds immeasurably to the game's addictivity. Whereas in *Rebel Assault* survival is basically a question of memorising enemy attacks, with *StarBlade* you're constantly wondering about your tactics – which targets should you hit first in order to best preserve your precious shield.

Despite its difficulty, *StarBlade* is rather small for its pricepoint, albeit with an immense challenge before you do get right to the very end. Nevertheless, as a piece of arcade history *StarBlade* is difficult to resist. Particularly ironic is the fact that while *Rebel Assault* is far newer, bigger and more ambitious, it's *StarBlade* which looks the more advanced. Partially this is because the encoding is so much sharper. *Rebel* often looks quite blotchy and lacking in colour, while *StarBlade* is beautifully colourful and razor-sharp throughout – on my 23-inch TV at least. Also, it's so much faster, more dramatic and, yes, unspeakably ferocious. If you think you're up to its challenge, check it out. □ ssw

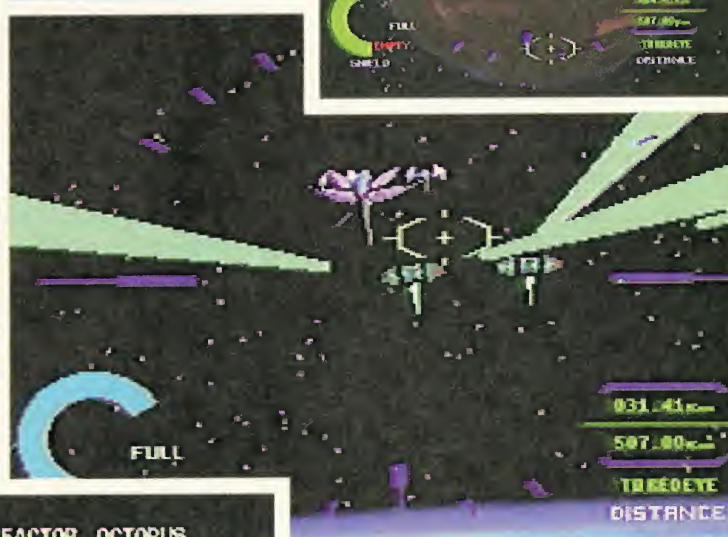
3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Your ship zooms up, turns, then dives down into an alien city as missiles swarm upwards, left. In the arcades, *StarBlade*'s success led to *Galaxian 3*, currently the centre-piece of Namco's Japanese arcade with a huge room on hydraulics to simulate its acrobatic turns.



Too late! An enemy missile fills your screen, left, seconds before impact. Below, Red Eye, the artificial moon trying to destroy your own world.



Above, an apocalyptic scene from the first battle. Below, screens from the launch and briefing sequences – stylistic masterpieces.



Space Pirates

Publisher: American Laser Games © 001 5058801718 **Developer:** In-house **Save Game:** No **Price:** £45 **Available:** Now

Mad Dog II: The Lost Gold and Crime Patrol (reviewed in 3DO Magazine 3) marked a significant advance over the rather rusty format defined by Mad Dog McCree. The old painfully linear structure was disguised with branching options and much improved action, leading us to expect another leap for the year 2023. Sadly, *Space Pirates* entirely fails to take the genre any further, clearly hoping ALG's most elaborate live-action shoot yet will compensate. It doesn't, not really, although the core gameplay retains its basic appeal while the pulp sci-fi entertains in gigglesome B-movie fashion.

The plot is superbly preposterous, giving you the role of an heroic Star Ranger charged with taking down Captain Talon. His huge horde of planet-hopping Space Pirates are kidnapping colonists and making everyone's life hell. Talon is a classic videogame nasty, discarding motivation and fiendishly logical schemes in favour of the mad dog, exhibitionist plots Hollywood loves. Rather than locking his hostages in some dark, hidden away security zone, they're scattered all over the place. For some reason, these hostages tend to be uniformly young, female and scantily clad. Moreover, rather than a good old stasis field, Talon opts for tying their hands together with rope so they can be seen writhing and pleading all over the place. What a fiend!

Your only hope of destroying the nearly indestructible Talon (who pops up now and again to remind you that he's nearly indestructible) is by collecting enough energy crystals to power-up the star splitter cannon (it's big), and blast Talon into a sequel.

There's no doubt that the camp visuals of *Space Pirates* are entirely appropriate for light gun genre – flamboyant lasers are a whole lot more fun than old west horseplay – and ALG have certainly spent a modest sum on sets, costumes and location shoots to create a fairly impressive environment. Sure, the style is more Flash Gordon than Blade Runner, with fabulously silly alien make-up and ludicrously leathery baddies, but it looks better than your average episode of *Scavengers* or *Blake's 7*. And whilst the odd bit of tacky sexploitation could cause offence (particularly the large amount of bewitchingly dressed female pirates to be dispatched along the way) there's nothing as overtly tacky as *Crime Patrol*'s strip joint.

At times *Space Pirates* gets positively surreal, certain scenes exposing an intriguing 'artiness' that suggest bursts of inspiration from the 'creative team'. One section, with a dominatrix and dwarf standing on top of a sand dune, throwing goblets in the air for you to shoot, truly baffles but is still impressive for

After brilliantly exploiting the Wild West and contemporary urban ghettos for its previous blast-a-thons, ALG have now set their sights on 2023 AD for gunslinging arcade action. Thus we have *Space Pirates*, a future so frightfully tacky, you'd probably turn the gun on yourself...



Evil Talon, right, is a bad as can be while the regulation princess-in-distress, above, adds some gloriously naff, Seventies-style glamour to the rapid-fire action.



its dream like direction and (shaky) symbolism. The occasional 'trip' like this is weirder and more affecting than anything ALG have pulled off before, but too infrequent to significantly enhance the experience. For the most part *Space Pirates* is typical laser gun stuff, fast and furious, playing it for quick, straight thrills. The FMV quality is consistently good, with each short scene featuring a pre-set number of baddies popping up from behind boxes, dropping from ropes or leaping in front of you, all spliced in random order so that whilst you may know where they'll appear from, you won't know when. This stays off terminal monotony, as does the familiar technique of throwing hostages onto screen at random intervals, luring the nervous and trigger happy into an unintentional assassination. Take out a friend, and you're bearded spiritual guide will rap your knuckles and take away a life, and those continues are soon used up... Most striking is the use of hand held cameras, cheap but effective camera tricks and a few optical effects (for lasers and disintegrations) which certainly make this the best looking of the GameGun bunch. The slightly more tactical approach required – memorising colour sequences for freeing hostages and codes for crystal implementation – makes play almost adventure like, but don't be fooled into think-

ing this is a thinking man's game. As with its predecessors, *Space Pirates*' play revolves around repetition, learning the mechanics of each section, making slow progress. However, the wide variety of planets to hop across and aliens to encounter makes it all feel pretty big, with enough branch points to postpone irritation when a seemingly impossible section gets just too much to cope with.

Play wise, one-player joypad control is fiddly (the A/C slow/fast buttons on the joypad are unsatisfactory), two-players with two joypads is better, but using the GameGun itself is the best way to play, bolstering the atmosphere and enabling much faster reaction times. If you're a fan of the genre, there's no doubt that *Space Pirates* is as good as its limited but fun predecessors, and novices seduced by the format will be entertained for a while. But with the follow up, *Drug Wars*, offering more of the same, ALG really should consider investing some thought on this format, as it needs some serious re-invention if it's to acquire anything larger than a cult following. □ **mcw**

***NOTE:** Potential purchasers who wish to use the ALG GameGun should be warned ALG have yet to release official, UK PAL versions of their games. Unless otherwise marked, all copies are import and won't work with a GameGun on a PAL TV.

3DO Magazine rating: ★★



Exteriors, above and top left, provide a welcome breath of fresh air, with both arty and tacky scenes. Get shot by a sharp shooting enemy, left, and there's the obligatory cackle of laughter to inspire gnashing of teeth. Below, another elaborate bondage set from kinky Talon...

The easiest way to lose lives (and your patience) is to accidentally clip hostages, who are randomly dragged on screen to trick the trigger happy. The amount of female baddies to be blasted (inset) is surprisingly high.



The *Daedalus* Encounter

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 **Developer:** Mechadeus **Save Game:** 4 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

While Tia Carre's Wonderbra-equipped spacesuit compares oddly to Christian Bocher's functional body armour, *Daedalus* is on the whole a surprisingly serious and grown-up adventure. Compared to the mind-numbing banality and ropey special effects of *Stargate*, *Daedalus'* imaginative, extravagant visuals are a revelation. The cliché opening shot of a sun's corona flaring over the curvature of a huge planet is beautifully done, bearing comparison with anything in 2001. The ship itself is reminiscent of *Aliens'* Sulaco, but if anything more impressive. Cutting edge computer graphics come complete with believable grime, while running lights brighten up the grey with washes of red and blue in true ILM style.

Mechadeus' artists really come into their own with the alien landscapes. The immense potential of CGI is exploited to the full with sets which would cost millions on the Hollywood backlot. Then there's the slick animation of various aliens, the flawless composition of live-action actors and CGI backgrounds – all framed with slick camera pans, zooms and close-ups.

The plot itself isn't quite so extraordinary, reusing that sci-fi favourite of stumbling on a deserted alien ship. The backstory is that the first interstellar war of 2135AD ended with your ship being blown apart. Tia and Christian ejected successfully, but your pod got hit with debris – scratch one body. Now reduced to a 'brain-in-a-box', you got boosted like most of the parts of Tia and Christian's new ship, all for a quest to find fame and fortune salvaging wrecks. The opening pyrotechnics of the space war

Right, has Tia fallen into a swoon for Christian? Or is she just worried his thick skull was fatally bashed in a fall? Like any classic TV soap opera, the game constantly teases the viewer over whether the leads will fall in love...



Hollywood stars, awesome SGI sets and state-of-the-art special effects... There have been interactive movies before, but never anything quite like this.

are neat, but the real fun comes with Tia and Christian shuffling their feet as they explain your rather dire situation. The acting is a world away from the wooden performances in most of Digital Pictures output – there's a real humour about this game.

The game's visual panache comes through with special force on 3DO thanks to an excellent conversion by Palmsoft. While the PC version offered a choice between small window FMV or jerky fullscreen, the 3DO version is fullscreen and completely smooth. The FMV isn't quite as pinsharp as *Wing III*, but the occasional glitch is minor and overall it's excellent. There's also a superb stereo soundtrack which, besides dialog which is both well acted and wittily written, boasts a wealth of exceptionally convincing sound effects and good background music.

So after all this praise, we finally come to the gameplay. What of that, then? Well, it's not bad either. There are

occasional arcade sections, such as joining in a laser-gun fight, while various locations have to be explored with searchlight and claw, but the core of the game are logic puzzles. Life support systems fail, doors refuse to open, strange alien artifacts need to be activated. For all of these problems, superbly drawn puzzles expand to fill the screen and get the old brain cells ticking over.

Old Spectrum puzzlers like *Deflector* are stylishly resurrected in



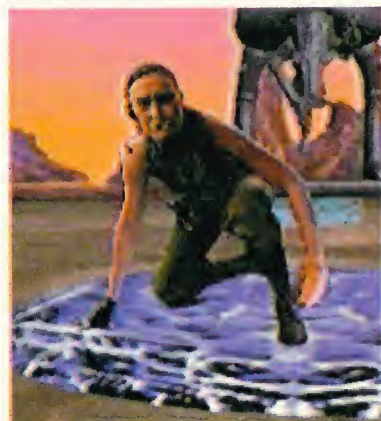
One of the few arcade sequences has you blasting these bat-like creatures. Hit something and a cut sequence shows it dying.

hi-res, 24bit colour mode. Besides deflecting laser beams, you must arrange planets for a solar eclipse, superimpose various shapes to obtain a coherent image and much, much more. These start off pretty tame, and three skill levels do make a big difference, while the user-interface is the best I've ever seen – saving before every problem and allowing you to jump right back to a problem if you die on it.

Arcade maniacs are never going to be reconciled to this 21st century Krypton Factor, but even non-puzzle fans should give it a look. After all, if you really were stuck on an alien spaceship, it's all too believable that most of your time would be spent puzzling over obscure iconographic problems. *Daedalus* at least throws in some action – not to forget Tia as well, of course.

Overall, *The Daedalus Encounter* is a pretty cool movie and reasonably interactive with it. If you fancy the idea of going on a sci-fi adventure with Tia, this is an excellent implementation. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Top, that's you, that is. The probe your disembodied brain controls is frequently shown whizzing about the spectacular sets. On the left, the vertical strip of your virtual controls overlay a particularly ugly monster. From the top: yes/no, analyse, data, activate probe arm, searchlight, IR/UV light, probe on, probe diagnostics, probe launch and laser. The various analysis screens are particularly well done and often have useful clues hidden in the techno-jargon.

While Tia's an excellent distraction, this is the real game: a variety of beautifully presented and varied logic puzzles. Top: rotate the outer circles so their designs combine to produce the required image in the centre. Middle: rotate the various planets to cause an eclipse. Bottom: pressing a button causes some plungers to slide home, others to pull back. Work out the button sequence to get all the plungers home.

The Far Reaches Kingdoms

Publisher: Interplay © 01235 821666 **Developer:** Virtual Image Productions **Save Game:** Yes **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Anyone who's seen The Legend Of Zelda cartoon series on TV will immediately feel at home with this title. *Kingdom's* visual style is very familiar, with ye olde villages and mist swathed swamps populated by wizards, sorcerers and serfs, making the lands of *Kingdom* an immediately familiar environment. The storyline, with shades of Tolkien and Star Wars, is also instantly recognisable.

You take the part of Lathan, a *Zeldaesque* apprentice of magic and adventure, who, with the guidance of a wizened magician, must visit the five domains of the *Kingdom* world in search of five relics. When combined, these should provide the power to defeat the evil Wizard Torlock, who's over-run the once peaceful utopia of your childhood. The *Lord Of The Rings* inspired intro cartoon footage is some of the best in the game, with black clad horseman (tastefully) butchering the locals – a degree of violent excitement sadly lacking from the game proper.

The basic format is very similar to the Don Bluth interactive cartoons, with short sections of FMV action linking together the points where you get to interact with the title. Here, however, there are fewer 'arcade' scenes requiring quick reflexes. Instead, each location spools a short amount of dialogue or action and then freezes, so you can either replay the vignette, or use a cursor to point to prospective locations or objects you might pick up. At the side of the action window, a pouch is shown, and selecting a weapon or spell from here and activating it – in the correct location – results in the action rolling into another sequence.

The pace is very different to a Bluth title then, with a much more lethargic, wandering feel. The elderly magician basically acts as an option guide, fulfilling a similar role to the wizened cowboy in *Mad Dog McCree*, telling you where

While *DeathKeep* and *Space Hulk* have given arcade visuals to RPG gameplay, permanently smudging the edges of different genres, *Kingdoms* offers a very different hybrid. A combination of languid, junior level adventuring and '80s Laserdisc coin-op technology seems a distinctly retrograde step for the 3DO...

you can go but also preparing potions essential for later sections of the game. Nevertheless, just like *Dragon's Lair* it's difficult to progress until you see the new set of footage and learn how to react via trial and error. *Kingdoms* is actually worse with many locations resulting in instant death unless you go there equipped with the necessary potions.

This sudden death device seems to be a crude effort to disguise the small scale of the adventure though, since not only is *Kingdom* pretty short on locations, its puzzles are ridiculously easy – one for junior adventurers only.

However, this random death element rather sabotages even this, minority audience, as youngsters are as likely as adults to blanch at outright unfairness. Such unreasonable depletion of lives would be unacceptable in an arcade game, so why should an RPG adventure allow them?

Overall, *Kingdoms* is seriously flawed. The ability to travel to any location at will is a good enough idea, theoretically avoiding the linear progress of titles such as *Space Ace* and *Dragon's Lair*, but because the adventure itself relies on specific puzzles being solved in a linear order, the premise of free movement is dashed. The sudden death syndrome seems a brutal way of forcing you down the correct game path. Sure, you can make notes of which places are 'no-win' zones, but inevitably, they must be visited occasionally to check whether you're allowed there yet or not. Solving the simplistic puzzles (wave a spell of sight over a blind man to gain further spells) does produce some



Many of the characters have such exaggerated vocal mannerisms, that you have to re-play their speeches to catch what was said.

pleasure, particularly when an extravagant animation is the reward, but the stop/start nature of play is much more noticeable than arcade style interactive cartoons, where at least the action never lets up. The fact that each location usually has just one 'scene' or path cripples any sense of real exploration – basically you're just visiting lots of tiny adventures.

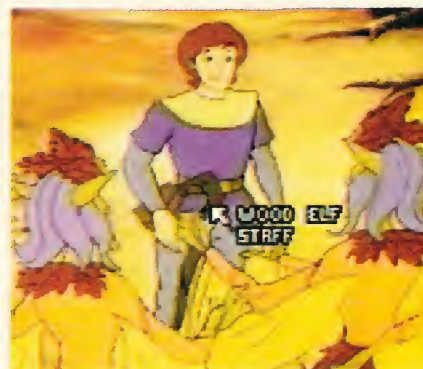
The flawed structure is matched by some major FMV coding disasters. The animation quality is, in itself, pretty good, lacking the dynamism of Don Bluth titles, but still featuring some nice art with impressive switches of scale and depth. Unfortunately, poor encoding means fast action scenes get horribly broken up. If this was live action footage, the poor coding might not be so noticeable, but with subtly coloured, cartoon animation, break-up is horribly obvious. Since it's pretty much a children's title, this lazy attitude is even more shameful, and with so many problems in the game engine itself, poorly programmed visuals really are the final insult and should guarantee a swift demise for this title in retail. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★





Gifts beget gifts in *Kingdom*. Almost everyone will provide you with valuable spells or objects to further your request in return for gifts you've received elsewhere. This exposes the game's linear path, and makes play tedious as you memorise sequences.



Above, death lurks everywhere in this game, as dictated by evil Wizard Torlock, below.



The various characters in *Kingdom* are well realised and it's easy to spot who's going to lend a hand to your quest and who isn't. As the shot below shows, however, the small FMV window diminishes the overall impact, and makes the poor coding even more surprising (and less forgivable). The map, left, suggests a vast area to explore, but is sadly misleading...



Lost Eden

Publisher: Virgin © 0171 3682255 **Developer:** Cryo **Save Game:** 3 SRAM slots **Price:** £34.99 **Available:** Now

For companies renowned for their stunning visuals, CD-ROM technology was always going to be irresistible. 650MB of storage space meant the quality of art previously limited to brief intros and title screens could be extended throughout entire games. Just like their British equivalent, Psygnosis, Cryo first set about cloning Laserdisc coin-ops like *Firefox*, but unsurprisingly, neither *Microcosm* nor *MegaRace* were great successes – other than visually. However Cryo also set about using CD technology for adventures...

Lost Eden on the PC was the first fruit of that project, with *Dragon Lore* and *Revenge* to follow. Early screenshots caused just as much of a sensation as its arcade-oriented predecessors. With Jurassic Park fever only just abating, yet more computer generated dinos seemed the very acme of cutting edge gaming. And, once again, Cryo made sure to incorporate a novel storyline.

Originally titled *Saurus*, the name changed to reflect the concept of an alternate, 'lost eden' where man and dinosaur co-exist. During your great grandfather's time they actually co-operated – your forebear was known as the Architect for the enormous citadels he constructed using human and dinosaur labour. Sadly, his own son came to be known as the Enslaver for his less constructive, more power-hungry ambitions. His drive for supremacy saw all but one of the citadels destroyed...

Prince Adam is the Architect's great grandson, but his knowledge is presumed lost and your father is adamant you must remain safe inside Mo, the last citadel. The story starts with Eloi, a pterodactyl adviser, recounting Adam's coming of age as the beginning of a great adventure pitting Adam against the evil Tyran, led by Moorkus Rex. The elderly Eloi then reappears from time to time, com-

Don't worry, he's on your side!



From *Captain Blood* to *Revenge*, the people behind Cryo have carved an enviable reputation for their innovation and visual artistry. In 1994, their dino-themed adventure enjoyed expansive, screenshot-heavy previews as part of the exciting new wave of CD-ROM only products. A year on, does the reality match up to the hype?

menting on various gaming milestones, an appropriate framing of an adventure which is, ultimately, as pre-ordained as any ancient folk tale.

The game's visuals are split between basically static, minimally animated talking heads and pre-rendered 3D Studio sequences. Typically, you'll arrive in a new location and begin exploring. Onscreen icons let you move between locations, often represented by static landscapes. If you happen upon some dinosaurs or a human tribe, an animation sequence will be triggered. Then you get to 'talk' – which largely consists of being updated on the plot, getting advice and, crucially, trading or using various objects discovered during your explorations. At this level, *Lost Eden* is at its most vulnerable. The adventuring is fairly basic, with an awful lot of backtracking to previous locations to try out some new object in combination with an old location or character. While some of the puzzles are quite neat, and there's a fair few plot twists, overall gameplay lacks the sophistication to obscure what is a pretty slow-paced experience.

More surprisingly, graphics which caused jaws to drop only last year now seem rather dated. While many of the pre-rendered animations are excellent and the FMV encoding is fine, they lack the vividness of more recent work such as *Phoenix 3* or *D*. The static talking heads have fared even worse, looking painfully dated compared to a real-life Mark Hamill in *Wing Commander III*. Probably the most painful



As you progress through the game, you not only collect objects but helpful characters too. You can ask their advice by clicking on them, while clicking on Prince Adam himself brings up the game save options.

comparison is Panasonic's *Daedalus Encounter*, which superbly mixes vividly drawn CGI sets with real life actors.

Lost Eden still looks attractive, of course, and the soundtrack is often excellent with one track sounding akin to Enigma's recent hit. The control interface is well thought-out with optional captions meaning you can bypass listening to long set-pieces, quickly moving on to the next scene. The learning curve is nicely judged, unlike *Kingdoms*, and mostly avoids sudden-death syndrome. Best of all, Virgin have taken advantage of 3DO's low royalty structure to offer this – like *Cannon Fodder* – at a very reasonable £34.99. If you fancy a stylish, imaginatively presented little adventure this certainly fits the bill and might suit younger players particularly well. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



Unsurprisingly, T-Rex dinos serve as the game's villains led by Morkus Rex (right). Skilful diplomacy (left) can bring the various tribes together with friendly dinosaurs so that new citadels can be built (below, right).



In the depths of Citadel Mo, an iguandon blows on a horn (above right), surrounded on all sides by giant friezes relating how the great Architect built the Citadels. Below, a keeper of many secrets but his mind has been destroyed by the memory of his foul crimes...



This tribe leader, above, may be miserable due to the task ahead, or perhaps it's because all tribes are single sex to save work for the graphic artists!

Alone *in the* Dark

Publisher: Infogrames © 0171 7388199 **Developer:** Krisalis **Save Game:** 3 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

As the hype machine is already churning on *Alone III* for the PC, it may seem annoying that 3DO system owners are being fobbed off with the original – especially as the programmers haven't even bothered to update the 3DO multiplayer version. However, the hoary old excuse that it's a classic game which doesn't need changing actually holds water with *Alone*. Thanks to an excellent soundtrack and stunningly rendered locations, *Alone In The Dark* has the ambience of a classic horror movie and everyone deserves a visit to this haunted house.

Your objective is simple: escape from the house. Compared to its sequels it's not that big a challenge, but while veterans can whiz through it in hours others will have more trouble – and fun. Besides being packed with puzzles, this Gothic abode offers an unusual game perspective. Well, three or four different perspectives per room to be exact. As your character wanders about, the game automatically swaps between the most suitable or – being French – most dramatic perspectives to show what's happening. Although this can be confusing at first, it not only helps show off the polygon graphics but also hints at the various puzzles and traps which lurk in every room. Some objects are hidden in corners of rooms

One of the biggest PC releases of '93, *Alone* made polygon graphics sexy with its haunting mix of realistic animation and bucket loads of blood. Is the 3DO version still worth a shiver?

or must be placed in certain positions, so a thorough walk around of each location is essential.

Another reason to explore is the surprisingly high degree of interaction. Cupboards not only look good, but can be pushed in front of windows to prevent nasties bursting through. Vases can be smashed to find keys, mirrors combined to spectacular effect and a whole host of weapons put to work.

Up until *Alone*, polygon games were all rather clinical and gore-free. *Alone* changed that by not only by having plenty of blood splashed about, but also through disturbingly realistic animation. Watching a zombie savage your character in a spray of blood is a truly gruesome experience. However, I suppose it helps justify the various knives, swords and broken bottles you use against them, not to mention a satisfyingly lethal shotgun. This is, without doubt, a very adult game, both in content and atmosphere, but that's a compliment rather than a criticism. The



thread of violence that runs through *Alone* adds to the unbearable tension, overshadowing every scene with spine tingling dread.

There are certainly some very weird scenes as well. The frozen ballroom dance, for example, is a puzzle as unsettling as it is tricky. What's more, unlike most adventures the design and innovation of *Alone* becomes more not less impressive towards the games climax. Clearly, as the programmers became more comfortable with their original idea they got more ambitious, imbuing their product with a degree of artistry rarely seen in a videogame.

So despite being a drearily unimaginative conversion, the strength of the original game makes it still well worth considering – especially as the UK version runs fullscreen on PAL TVs. The only notable drawback is that the game does require a huge chunk of NVRAM for its save games. It's worth it though, because this is an totally enthralling gothic adventure which brilliantly sets the scene for the imminent, and far tougher sequel. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Above, the shotgun is the easiest way to dispense of ghouls, and the most enjoyable. Inset, attacks from this snapping, vicious dog, are invariably fatal without a weapon.



A reflection of itself will give this winged guard something to cry about. It's down these stairs that *Alone In The Dark* really opens up, with many monsters and puzzles below ground...



The Horde

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 3847774 **Developer:** Toys For Bob **Save Game:** 3 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now



f all the initial batch of games for the 3DO system, *The Horde* is probably the most promising in the way it merges so many different elements into a single game. The strategy element is initially hardly noticeable, while the arcade action is fast, funny and spectacular enough to get almost anyone hooked – which is when the Hordling-like jaws of long-term addiction set in with ever more intriguing problems. Wrap all this up with some fun FMV, great sound FX plus inspired soundtracks and who could resist?

The intro sets the scene with the king being saved from choking to death by a serving boy. The cheap sets and awful English accents mean you'll probably skip past it, but as the game proceeds the FMV reappears with short clips to reward completing a level, or announcing some random event such as a meteor (!). All the acting is good, but RoboCop's Michael Gregory steals the show as the evil chancellor. His plotting is often truly hilarious and while the story is hardly compulsive, the game is and the FMV serves as an amusing break between levels.

Your objective is to survive a tour through the kingdom's five provinces, spending several years in each and gathering enough money to pay your taxes. In each province there's a small settlement of farmers who automatically go about tending their land. The finely detailed graphics show the various crops growing, and at the end of each season they're

The Horde is one great lolloping mongrel of a game. One third novel strategy game, one third bloodthirsty arcade game and one third FMV gagfest.

harvested, yielding monies to you. As time goes on, the farmers multiply and settlements slowly spread across the land. You can even go into farming yourself, raising cattle or planting trees which, when grown, can be chopped down for wood.

It should be an idyllic life, but there's a problem or two. Well, several thousand actually. The Horde are as cheery and vicious a bunch as you could ever hope to avoid. At the end of each season their

cheery yodels fill the air and they begin

lolloping in. Bounding across the plains, their arms swinging about and jaws lolloping open they head straight for your village.

Hordlings know only two words:

'food' and 'eat'. As they sweep through the village, precious crops are hovered up and houses attacked. Once the walls collapse the Hordling gulps the unfortunate occupant in a single bite. It then sits there, grinning and rubbing its fat belly. If you can kill it before it swallows, the farmer is saved



– if not he's dead.

Besides being brilliantly drawn and animated characters, the Hordlings also have a full repertoire of bodily noises for eating and swallowing. So as you rush about trying to thwack them, your TV echoes with the sounds of crops disappearing and farmers being eaten. At first the effects are hilarious, but as the end of the year approaches things become more grim: fail to pay your taxes and the chancellor has you beheaded!

To protect the village you can build fences and deploy Hordling-popping traps. For serious money you can buy extra weapons or even deploy knights and archers – although remember you have to pay their wages! As your defences increase, so the Hordlings get tougher. The easily poppable Hordling are accompanied by thick-skinned giants, voodoo Hordlings, fast-moving piranhas on legs and more.

These varied enemies not only make the arcade action far more frantic, they also pose real tactical problems. How do you best arrange your traps, will deploying knights cost more money than you can afford? This may sound difficult, but after a few goes you'll go sweeping through the years having great fun. Then you'll run into trouble and realise you needed to save more money. So you'll go back to the start and realise just how tough the game can be.

Overall, *The Horde* is a near-perfect blend of arcade action and compulsive strategy. There's some slowdown on the arcade sections, but it doesn't seriously affect the gameplay of this awesome title. If you've got a 3DO system, you've got to get this magical experience. Heartily recommended! □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Below, the evil chancellor offers another patch of land. You won't like it! Right, the Shimto plains provide a fairly easy intro to the game. Below right, Hordus Freezus Buttofum attack.



D

Publisher: Panasonic © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Warp **Save Game:** 1 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

The stylishly directed opening sequence reveals the rain swept landscape of Los Angeles, 1997, with police cars and helicopters swarming around a searchlight bathed hospital. Inside, a massacre has taken place, with artistically composed corpses littering the noiseless corridors, whilst in a small side room, a final victim is spectacularly dispatched by a gunman.

We cut away to your character, an attractively dressed young woman arriving at the hospital, the smooth glass doors drifting aside to reveal the carnage within. The point-of-view camera, hovering and circling uncertainly across the bloodshed, cuts to a reaction shot of 'you'; hands to your troubled face. The brilliant fashion with which director Kenji Eno has designed this character is immediately obvious. The face is simply drawn, rounded and soft, her expressions convincingly and delicately formed with enlarging eyes and subtle lines vividly conveying 'your' reactions..

Just as you're wondering at the strange beauty of the composition, a prism of light washes across the hospital reception, and the structure morphs into a Victorian mansion. The glass doors mutates into a sturdy, wooden barrier to exit, and the adventure's begun.

Unlike the step by step stills of *Myst*, *D* lowers the resolution slightly and brackets the screen with huge, albeit cinematic borders in return for continuous movement. Nudge forward and the first person perspective smoothly updates, moving you between the pre-set positions where you can stand. This makes play slightly easier, as areas of the game which hold no advantage in exploring are, basically, inaccessible. Move towards an object, say a chest of drawers, and click to search, and the view switches to a cut-away of your hand opening a drawer. Keys and items collected are easily accessed via a

A tantalising glimpse of outside. Right, you inspect your own reflection to gain clues from a compact, but the magic soon fades.



An enormous smash in Japan, *D* features some of the most stunning FMV graphics to be seen on a video game, the beautiful design compensating in full for the rather linear plot in this delightfully atmospheric adventure.

scrolling menu, and a sweeping musical score punctuates the correct use of an object.

To begin with, however, mundane problem solving is a distraction from the beauty of the locations, each room is delightfully detailed with authentic furniture and fittings. Everywhere is packed with attention grabbing curios – paintings on the wall shape shift and mutate to reveal horrific clues, sombre busts transform into nightmarish visions, bowls of clear soup mist into the colour of blood – but they're never irrelevant to the adventure, invariably offering some clue to what lies ahead. It's not just the imaginative inclusion of these forewarnings that impress, it's the extraordinary slickness with which

they're composed and directed – music and lighting all enhancing the atmosphere to a stunning pitch.

Perhaps the most extraordinary sequence happens early on, when you walk towards a seemingly dark wall, only to catch sight of yourself, reflected in a mirror, edging hesitantly towards yourself. As you stare, transfixed by your own, haunted reflection, faint ripples in your face are replaced by an enormous, grasping hand that pushes through the reflection, grabbing then retreating. Again, music and cut-aways are powerfully implemented to telegraph the emotional state, along with your own terrified face, conjuring an atmosphere of danger and excitement quite unique in videogames.



Perhaps the most distinctive stylistic touch that gives *D* such an excellent atmosphere, is the brilliant, low key lighting. Effects like the one above, and the stained glass windows, bottom left, really catch the eye.

Even the most mundane of adventuring features is revolutionised in *D*. One object you already have before entering the mansion/hospital is a compact mirror, which can be used to gain clues. Flip it open, and light washes over your face, the small round mirror becomes opaque, then a shadowy view of your next essential location shimmers into view. Each time you use the compact, however, the mirror cracks slightly, eventually shattering if its powers are over-used.

The chief downfall of *D* is its simplicity. Puzzles are fairly obvious, with objects generously hidden near to their solution, and there are next to no red herrings to distract you. Obviously, the phenomenal expense these wondrous FMV sequences means there are few non-essential areas padding the game out to make it bigger, but consequently, and much like the similar *Alone In The Dark*, *D* is a short lived, albeit captivating affair. It's impossible to die and the only save position is when you switch between CDs for the second half of the adventure. Action scenes, such as boulders chasing you down stairs, are watched rather than interacted with, yet the exemplary design never leaves you feeling uninvolved and the extraordinary beauty and panache of the whole affair makes *D* a very special title that should bewitch all who try it. *D2* on M2 should be quite something... ☐ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Slayer

Publisher: Mindscape © 01444 246333 **Developer:** SSI/Lion Entertainment **Save Game:** 1 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Dungeons & Dragons has been going for ages now, its enthusiasts evolving an ever more elaborate counter-reality for their lead figurines to move through. For the outsider the fantastic characters and scenarios seem alluring, but only the most ardent have the time or dedication to master an ever-growing rule book. Computers can automate all that boring paperwork, but until now they've struggled to do that and provide an involving graphics system. The first breakthrough was Mirrorsoft's *Dungeon Master*, which mixed D&D-style depth and 16bit 3D graphics to such effect it was not only a bestseller in its own right, but also sold a lot of the new fangled Amigas it ran on. Now *Slayer* aims to do the same thing for the 3DO system, making the graphics not only far more detailed and colourful, but also infinitely more convincing with incredibly fast, fluid animation. The surprise is that this doesn't come from some hotshot new developer, but boring old SSI – the masters of exceptionally authentic, graphically conservative (read, dull) sims. Nor are the developers content with simply making the game fast, it also includes *Doom II* tricks like being able to look through windows, and some stuff planned for *Doom III* like being able to look up and down – useful for negotiating traps – and multi-level architecture. You can look down four or five tiers and see monsters walking down there, waiting for you – it all adds to the experience of being in a real, interactive environment.

The game allows for just one main character, no teams, but as you'd expect from an official AD&D product, he or she can be finely tailor-made in his or her occupation, race, morality, stamina and much, much more. There are, however, 21 ready-made characters so you can plunge straight into the action. Within moments you can be dashing around dungeons, battling strange creatures and collecting all that wonderful treasure.

The 3DO system's chipset ushers in a whole new world of gaming, merging the depth of AD&D with state-of-the-art 3D visuals.

There are some 40 odd monsters to encounter, many of them brilliantly grotesque, and you'll need all your skills to come through the dungeon's 20 levels alive. Of course, there's plenty of traps, locked doors and also transporters – which offer instantaneous transport. The latter can be confusing since different areas tend to look alike and the onscreen automap, while a neat idea, is a little too small for comfort. Nevertheless this is totally engrossing adventure, firmly built on standard AD&D rules and yet surprisingly easy to get into.

One criticism that can be levelled at many games of the genre is their longevity of appeal. Once one dungeon's been solved there's little to be gained from playing it again. This is where *Slayer* really



Above, Goblins and Myconoids bunch up to attack – sadly for your energy bar, there's no slowdown so best be quick with the sword. Below left, a ghoul gets a little too close for comfort.

comes into its own. A random dungeon generator gives approximately four billion possibilities – and that's an awful lot of late nights. Still not enough? Then why not try the dungeon designer? Create your own labyrinths, decide how many treasure and monsters are to be found and fought. Avid D&Ders will delight at the amount of game in the package and neutrals will be pleasantly surprised by its accessibility. Recommended. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Above, a glimpse of the multi-level architecture – by holding down Shift Right you can pan up or down for some stunning views. Left, you can not only see through windows but attack through them too.

Hell

A Cyberpunk Thriller

Publisher: Gametek © 01753 553445 **Developer:** Take 2/Tetragon **Save Game:** 4 SRAM slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Hell's strongest lure is undoubtedly its scenario, combining traditionally sulphurous, razor-clawed demonology with a dystopian cyberpunk future. In 2095, hysteria over violence and immortality has swept to power the Hand Of God party, led by Imperator Solene Solux. Her solution to America's problems is to invite demons onto Earth to punish sinners! – an inspired bit of doublethink, ranking with witchburning for its theological perversity. Also brought in on the coat-tails of this imaginative system is the banning of alcohol, free speech, cyberspace, AI and even comics.

Two of the Hand's most trust-worthy agents are Gideon Eshanti and Rachel Braque. A team which works together and sleeps together, the game opening with them asleep in their apartment as government agents arrive to assassinate them. In a firestorm of laser bolts and scantily clad bodies, *Hell* begins as it means to go on, with double cross after double cross.

Exactly why the Hand has turned on its own is

Besides having all the best tunes, Satan also has a great cast of characters for epic story-lines. From Dante's *Inferno* to William Peter Blatty's *Exorcist*, the cause of evil has been the plot motor of numerous books and movies. Now, Gametek aim to make *Old Nick's* residence a hit videogame.

one of the mysteries which drive the narrative... in a manner of speaking. As turns out, Gametek are of the belief that the road to *Hell* is paved not with good intentions, but with endless reams of conversation. This is an adventure with all the pace and speed of Faust arranging his last appointment with Mephistopheles. In a normal adventure, a lengthy intro gives way to an environment packed with puzzles and mysterious objects with the occasional bit of speech. *Hell* turns this structure on its head, with a few scant puzzles virtually swamped by the CD-spoiled dialogue.

Much of the game is traditional, copstyle Q&A sessions with a list of questions to be ploughed through with each character. But more than this

there's introductory conversations where a character's lengthy opening remark brings a response from Gideon, then Rachel chips in – and if you've recruited additional characters, they can have a natter too. At times, *Hell* seems more like a radio play than a game.

To perk the conversations up, the game does makes extensive use of close-ups which have been expanded from the PC's tiny windows to fullscreen. The 3D Studio graphics are often highly impressive for demons, but humans tend to look like vacuum-formed plastic while lip-synching, even on an NTSC 3DO, is poor.

If there's any redeeming *Hell*, it comes from three things: the neat scenario, some clever options and big stars. Besides a slick but memory hungry save system, *Hell* allows you to replay every conversation so far (saving on note-taking), turn off the (lousy) music and activate onscreen text. Since it takes only a second to scan text, this can speed up the game considerably. When you meet Mr Beautiful, you won't want to however. It might be typecasting to have Dennis Hopper voice a drugdealing demon, but he still turns in a wonderful performance and the script gives him some great lines. Supermodel Stephanie Seymour also produces a good turn, especially as she's represented by a digitised hologram. Watching her pose atop a bar, you wonder why Take 2 didn't digitise all the human characters.

Where the 3D Studio graphics do score is in backgrounds and sporadic animated sequences. The scene where Gideon is disembowelled – and his entrails eaten by a superbly spooky hellhound – is one of the most gruesome sequences I've ever seen in a videogame. It's not actually that disturbing – after an hour of his soporific voice I was rather pleased by it, but there is a genuinely adult sensibility at work in this game. Besides the odd four letter word, there's some unusually macabre scenes. A kidnapped woman bound so her neck periodically breaks, then reforms because she's in hell, is made even more shocking by the Mafiosi demons which casually play poker beside her.

Overall, *Hell* is very much a curate's egg of good and bad elements. The basic adventure is way behind the sophistication and sheer interactivity of Lucasfilm's best. If your patience is short, this isn't the game for you. On the other hand the genuinely imaginative plot, often extraordinary graphics and adult orientation make it a truly provocative and intriguing experience. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★





Sanguinarius, above, polishes off Rachel after dramatically gutting her partner, Gideon, right. The duo had more success in the stylish intro (left). But in Hell, there are always ways back from death (above, left).



A detailed cyberspace map, left, provides a quick way of getting to the speakeasy (above) and comics shop (far left).



Warmongering generals and admirals suffer eternal torment in Hell, right, while demons take their places at the Pentagon's offices (above, left).

Immercenary

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Five Miles Out **Save Game:** 5 SRAM slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

First sight suggests developers Five Miles Out really have lived up to their tripped out name, melding a *Doom*-style blaster to a story right out of a Gibson novel. The gist of it is that you're mercenary enlisted to do battle in the virtual world that's taken over the future, a nether region misleadingly entitled Perfect. You must find and destroy Perfect 1, the SysOp of this world, and so save humanity from its binary fate.

Unlike *Doom*, knowing what the game's about is important and simply blasting everything in sight won't get you far. Double clicking on the A button reveals a map of Perfect, with a number of buildings marked in red. These represent the various domains of the most powerful Rithms that you must overcome to shut down the system. Defeat all seven in their lairs and only Perfect 1 'herself' will be left. Initially, this seems quite a formidable task.

Naturally, when you start the game you won't be in a position to tackle the guardians of Perfect. Status bars at the top of the screen reveal minimal energy and potential ratings for your three capabilities: Defence, Offence and Agility (ominously shortened to DOA throughout the game). Even if you're running at full power, you'll still have to rest often and recharge frequently by blasting minor characters. As you progress, your potential levels increase so you can store more energy, and by the end of the game there's little that can stop you.

Your weakness early on gives *Immercenary* a very different feel to *Doom*. Abandoning yourself to a raging gun-lust will simply get you killed – and double-quick too. Instead you have to keep reason in charge of your faculties and practise stealth, using the virtual terrain around you to

A heady concoction of cyberspace, astral projection and Quantum leaping sets EA's latest apart from the crowd. Dave Westley explores whether the future really is Perfect.

provide cover. A patient nature also comes in useful for interrogating characters in the DOAsys, a healing ground at the centre of Perfect. Maybe in this *Doom* variant you need to be more Sherlock Holmes, exploring with ingenuity rather than a rampaging brain-dead Rambo.

Appearances ultimately prove more virtual than real however. Increasing your DOA to level 1 merely requires you to follow three steps: (1) destroy a Rithm, (2) recharge yourself and (3) save. After the initial excitement of a new 3D world to explore has worn off the simplicity of this gameplay starts to wear thin. Even



The bizarre 'blurring' that shimmers across your view when hit, above, is a great effect. Also impressive are the FMV actors and computer generated occupants of this truly weird game.



worse is the fact that while most games get more challenging as they progress, *Immercenary* actually gets easier. Not only does your DOA level keep improving, but you gain access to a massive variety of extremely powerful power-ups which, when used intelligently, make you near omnipotent.

The result is that after the first few tense hours things deteriorate into simplistic *Doom*-style action. It's not all bad for that – the graphics are good enough to be both different and believable, with some of the lead sprites being gorgeous pieces of animation and artwork. There's also a dazzling array of visual effects – the 'Nukem' power-up leads to

an incredibly realistic mushroom style explosion, while Huffmaning (stealing a rival Rithm's energy) produces an unusual, highly distinctive warping, smear effect which is superbly disorientating in the midst of battle. Unfortunately, it's over far too quickly to succeed even as a simple blast-'em-up. I polished it off in well under a week and while the visuals may, occasionally, draw me back to this atmospheric, beautifully designed world, I doubt I'd be happy paying £45 for the privilege.

Overall then, *Immercenary* simply fails to deliver on its early promise and turns out to be uncomfortably stranded between the adventuring and blast-'em-up genres. It's a shame as Five Miles Out have built a quite brilliant graphic engine and wrapped both imaginative and seductive visuals around it, to often stunning effect. It really is a treat to behold. Maybe a sequel will amend matters, maybe the designers will know exactly what kind of game it is that they're trying to produce, but until then *Immercenary* can only be recommended to those with the cash to support such short-term, superficial delights. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

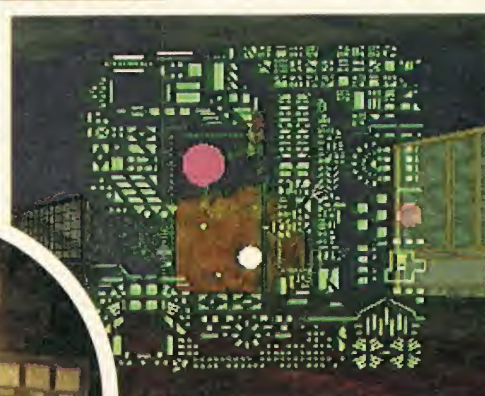




The interface to communicate with *Immercenary* characters is easy to use, far left, although it's not possible to ask "Why are you so damn odd?"



The texture-mapped buildings of *Immercenary* can get monotonous, above, so the map overlay, below, showing towers and important buildings is an essential aid to this VR world. Medusa, left, is much feistier than most of the other inhabitants of the game.



Myst

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 Developer: Cyan Save Game: 4 SRAM slots Price: £TBA Available: TBA

Cyan's *Myst* is a game like no other, relying on an incredibly strong, mythical, narrative to link together disparate strands of a fantastical storyline. A James Earl-Jones-style narrator reveals the origins of your quest; the stumbling upon an ancient, sepia coloured tome whose words lift you from your mundane world and into a land like no other. A real phenomenon on the PC, *Myst* catapulted its creators, the Rand brothers, into something resembling 'stars' – one trendy US magazine even included them in the top twenty twenty-some-things in the US. In part this was because of the game itself – one of the first adult-oriented, artistically ambitious adventures to hit the market. Perhaps the real cause, however, was its timing, arriving at the same time 'multimedia' became a buzzword with the critics looking for a *cause celebre* to triumph it.

The game opens as esoterically and enigmatically as possible. Filling the screen is a dusty brown book with a sparkingly vital landscape picture at the top right hand corner. The use of such books is repeated throughout the game, used as 'portals' that you can, in varying ways, interact with. In this particular case simply click on the landscape and you'll zoom into it – the picture slowly flooding the screen with a wash

The definitive odd-ball graphic adventure, *Myst*, warps to the 32-bit generation courtesy of Panasonic and the game's developers, Cyan. A critical and commercial success on the PC, how will such a cerebral game go down on the fast paced world of the 3DO?

of colour.

The world that you enter is composed of a number of beautifully rendered stills (2,500 in total), linked together to form a landscape of sea, trees, intricate buildings and complicated machinery. Most of these stills contain interactive elements – books to click on and read; buttons to press and so on. It's not dissimilar to the children's section of the science museum.

The first thing that you'll discover on your interactive travels sets the background to the adventure: namely that the strange, new environment that surrounds you originated in the mind of a character called Atrus, who used his

written words to generate the islands of your quest. You'll also discover that Atrus was not the only hand to have shaped these worlds, the lands of *Myst* themselves had a part; self aware they subverted and twisted Atrus's work in mostly obvious, yet sometimes incomprehensible, intangible ways.

Myst isn't a single land at all, rather a number of lands identical spatially, linked temporally. Jumping from time to time relies on solving various puzzles – solutions depend on lateral thought, careful research (finding clues around the island from notes scribbled in books, etc.) and being at the right time and the right place. Naturally, it takes a particular sort of mind to be able to cope with the IQ-like problems set (or rather, enjoy) and on the PC discussion groups were set up on the Internet so that like-minded souls could swap ideas and progress with the aid of the pained research of others.

While these puzzles give the game a distinctive flavour, it's the graphics themselves that set



One of the first puzzles in *Myst* is to count all of the switches that you find on the first level, and then switch them. Doing so reveals a portal to another dimension.

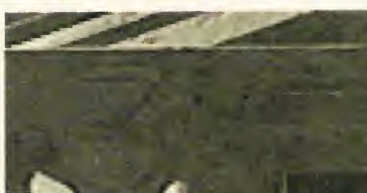
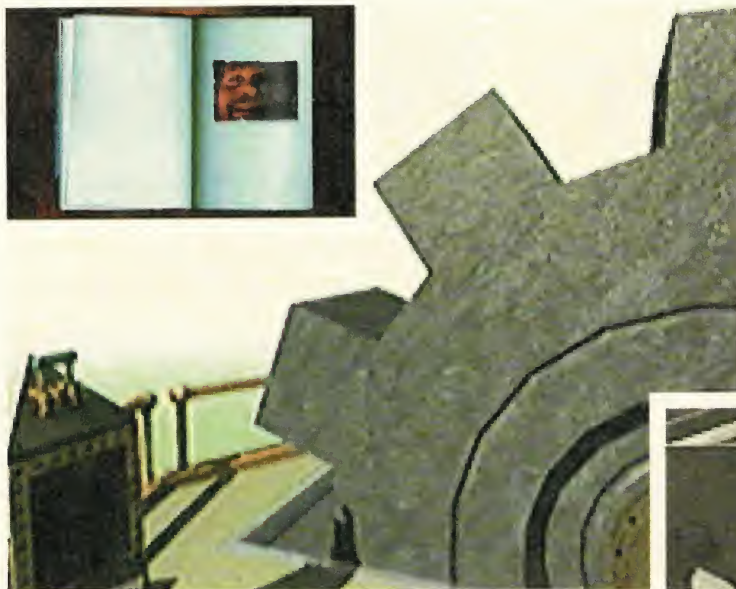
the game apart. On the PC, the hi-res, rendered 24bit imagery set new standards compared to the usual 256 colour palette, and few complained over the lack of animation. While the 3DO system normally handles fast-moving games with considerably more than 256 colours, its resolution is designed for a TV rather than a hi-res monitor. As a consequence, *Myst* simply doesn't cause the same impact on 3DO as it did on PC.

More importantly, because this is a straight port-over from the original, the game doesn't take into account the decreased resolution so that things that you need to be able to see (notes scribbled in books, etc.) are indistinct and hard to read. A similar lack of thought is shown in the control system, originally for mouse and poorly adapted for joystick.

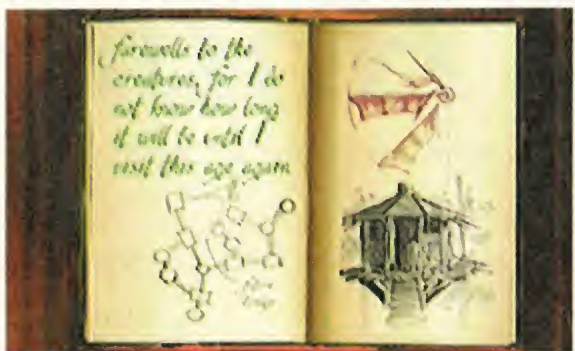
Though these criticisms might sound minor they do have quite an effect on gameplay. *Myst* is one of those products that's very much a package – relying on its individual elements to combine to form an atmospheric whole. The fact that one or two elements fail to do so means that the game misses becoming more than the sum of its parts. It's still very much an intriguing game and one that adventure aficionados will gain a lot of enjoyment from, but it is, nevertheless, so much less than it could have been. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★





The books in the library, right, contain a mass of information that not only set the background to all of your actions, but also provides clues as to how to go on. The visuals are delightfully lush and seductive.



Another World

Publisher: Interplay © 01235 821666 **Developer:** In-house **Save Game:** Password **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

The original, Amiga version of *Another World* caused something of a sensation with its unique, cinematic approach to the hoary old genre of side-scrolling arcade adventures. Not only was the long, scene-setting intro one of the best of its time, but at key moments in the game itself there would be short 'cut sequences'. When a gun is found, a two-second close-up animation shows a hand reaching for it – an atmospheric, and useful means of identifying otherwise tiny objects. Because of the memory limitations of 16bit systems, the sequences were simple, but their brevity and graphical simplicity was perfectly in keeping with the game and its fast pace. The Gallic pro-



A revolutionary game on 16bit, this classic French arcade adventure has been stylishly reworked for the 3DO multiplayer.

grammers even deliberately simplified the intro graphics to make the whole game maintain this muted, but atmospheric style.

Known as *Out Of This World* in the States, it's certainly not a huge game, but it's both imaginatively varied and very demanding – especially as the game for the 3DO system runs so much faster than any other version. Our errant scientist, Lester Knight Chaykin, is unusually limber for a quantum genius who's just stumbled onto inter-dimensional travel. He can walk, run, jump, swim and much, much more – all superbly realised with slick animation and intelligent joystick controls. The game begins with you having to make Chaykin swim to surface, then kick some rats out of the way before coming face to face with a huge alien panther – this sends you running backwards to jump across a chasm, then swing back over the panther to run into a laser-toting alien. Obviously, it's not your average arcade adventure.



This conversion, despite being handled by Americans, is very faithful to the original. Rather than slapping on some garish new sprites, Interplay have kept to the original look but recoloured it with a rich 256 colour palette. It obviously doesn't push the 3DO system in the way Gex does, but such a stylish conversion of a 16bit classic is still more than welcome on the new generation. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

The Lost Files Of Sherlock Holmes

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Mythos Software **Save Game:** 10 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

The 3DO system's first brush with the great detective comes courtesy of an earlier version of a CD-ROM war-horse. Like *Microcosm* and *Night Trap*, *Holmes* is a multimedia experiment which is rejigged for every new format. Sadly, like most pioneers it's more interesting technically than for its gameplay. The (once) hi-tech trickery comes in the form of FMV windows which flash up for every conversation. There are plenty of these as Holmes wanders about questioning people (there are some 60 characters and three



England's greatest detective, and its most notorious murderer, seem set for confrontation in this challenging adventure set in the London of 1888.

hours of dialogue), but with the 3DO system's effortless full-screen, full colour FMV these tiny windows have dubious appeal – especially considering the acting and, on PAL systems, annoying glitches. Worse, the connection between game graphics and FMV is jarringly tenuous. While *Another World* flawlessly blends in-game and cut-sequences, *Holmes* simply borders its FMV windows with antique picture frames – never mind the incongruity with distinctly 16bit game graphics.

After the initial fascination wears off, the best bit about the FMV is that it can be turned off. Yet it still exerts its cost on the gameplay structure: while most new adventures try to provide an illusion of free movement, *Holmes* provides a plodding, methodical adventure where

the problems come in linear order. If you get stuck in one place, you're generally stuck with no option to try something else.

Nevertheless, this is a big old game with plenty of challenge. The icon/verb control system is well thought out and easy to use, making the detective work enjoyable for the most of the time, and the fine attention to detail reflects well on the developers' love of Holmes. The story also appears to be quite intriguing, despite the dubious Ripper opening, and Holmes is of course a truly great character. While more advanced adventures linger in development, the *Holmes* war-horse provides a serviceable challenge in the meantime. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Powers Kingdom

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 **Developer:** Micro Cabin Corp **Save Game:** 4 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

In Japan consoles have always sold to a more mature audience and RPGs frequently top the charts. Unfortunately, because American and British console owners are younger, RPGs are rarely converted and this vast genre is largely unknown to non-Japanese speakers. Thankfully the 3DO system is different, and *Powers Kingdom* is one of Panasonic's best games so far.

Known as *Guardian War* in America, the scenario's appeal seems to have been lost in the English translation with the stylised intro recounting a banal fight between good and evil. Initial appeal is further undermined by yoghurt-tub heroes who look like characters from a Ski ad, blessed with names such as Pumpkin! Thankfully, you can input your own names and in-game things soon improve.

While most Japanese RPGs look awful – due to the memory constraints of SNES carts – Micro Cabin have gone to town with the 3DO version. Each of the variously themed landscapes is presented in full 3D, quickly and smoothly rotating around as you

Bizarre, spectacular and very different, this combative role-playing game provides a unique insight into Japanese gaming.

move. The numerous spells are genuinely dramatic with realistic flames, thunderstorms and much more.

Combat is very much at the heart of the game. The kingdom is split into several dozen zones and you progress through them one at a time. In each zone you have to roam about until you've found and killed the twenty or so enemies.



The finding is easy, zone layouts are relatively simplistic, but when you encounter an enemy, things become more interesting. Besides the three or so weapons or spells a character can own, they can also

have two additional bodies with their own weapons. You can also recruit enemy characters and bring them into your party. Unlike normal characters, these aren't controlled directly, but you can arrange their attack patterns. The best fun is when you engage a couple of enemies, unaware of other enemies on the horizon, leading to some huge battles. And as the enemies get smarter they start using their



own magic – even healing themselves.

All this is great fun, but ultimately there's something a bit too methodical about it. The ability to save at any time removes a lot of the challenge and the game doesn't change all that much, apart from new tactics for new monsters. Nevertheless, it's addictive, very unusual and well worth a look. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Star Control II

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 9730011 **Developer:** Fred Ford & Paul Riche III **Save Game:** 10 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Star Control 2, like *The Horde*, is an ambitious attempt to combine arcade and strategy elements. The difference is that *The Horde* was coded for 32bit, arcade-quality hardware while *Star Control 2* seems designed for 8bit tech. The core arcade game takes the basic *Asteroids* engine – rotate, thrust and fire – and uses it for 22nd Century combat between starships. The same control method is even reworked for navigating between planets and exploring their surfaces. With *Star Control 2* the 'next generation' appears positively geriatric.

However, it's worth persisting because not only is the strategy game incredibly involving, but even the arcade sections improve. A casual game with a PC owner brings forth a stream of technobabble about various ship types, weapons systems and surprisingly sophisticated tactics. There's simply a huge amount to the game and the strategy side offers not just trading, intricate negotiations and galaxy-spanning wars but also an exceptionally involving storyline.

The Ur-Quan's sudden attack on Earth in 2112 left your starship battered and lost on an alien plan-

Awards such as Best Action-Strategy Game 1992, Best Action Game 1993 and Best Adventure Game 1993 show how well the PC original went down. But is it still fun for '95 on the 3DO?

et. Here you find an ancient factory and slowly construct an incredible new ship: the Vindicator (although like the captain's name, the game allows you to change it). You return to Earth and find it enslaved by the Ur-Quan – the battle to free it and many other alien races is both complex and entirely addictive, the adventure going through many different twists and turns as you freely roam the galaxy.

As you'd expect from Crystal, this is the best version by light-years. Not only is there a stunning intro, but the control menus have been smartened up, the action scenes feature smooth scaling and the various alien graphics have been prettified (or, more accurately, uglified). The main change, however, is a superlative new soundtrack with excellent music (sounding very like the cloud music from the original *Star Trek* movie) and atmospheric speech for all the characters you meet. Occasionally this can be tedious, it would be quicker to scan text usually, but



overall it's very involving. Sure, the entire game engine should've been reworked for the 3DO multi-player but that would take years and in the meantime 3DO system owners have a very slick, classic game to while away a great many late nights. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Flashback

Publisher: US Gold © 0121 6253366 **Developer:** Delphine **Save Game:** Password **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

Today's barely interactive, FMV-heavy interactive movies have given the genre a dire reputation. *Flashback*, and its revolutionary predecessor *Another World*, are different. They appropriate the language of films – involving storylines, close-ups, cutaways and so on – without losing the gameplay. Despite its age, *Flashback*'s individual graphic style is just as welcome today as it ever was, especially with the introduction of even more vivid 3DO colours and a whole new sound-field.

Like *Another World*, *Flashback* is essentially a platformer, but one whose gameplay is set apart from the competition by the way its central character, Conrad Hart, is controlled. There are no less 13 different moves – from small and long jumps to somersaults and climbs, all with a gun in hand, ready for action. Each move is a marvel of realistic, roto-scoped animation and entirely convincing. In a fighting game like *SSFII* such control would be taken for granted, but in this genre such versatility is both unusual and enjoyable, making *Flashback* instantly fresh to pick up and play.

Another innovative feature of the Amiga original was the insertion of cut-away scenes at important junctions to reward the discovery or use of an object. They're here too but for the 3DO system they've been replaced with 3D Studio affairs. While bringing the game 'up to date' visually, it's nevertheless a risky strategy to take. The original cut scenes

The whole game looks like a highly stylised sci-fi movie, with well designed enemies, below, drawing laser pistols in a flash. Reaction time is a factor in this fast moving platformer. The opening jungle, top right, has plenty of problems to baffle beginners.



Virgin's mega-hyped *Heart of Darkness* may not be due until Xmas, but its unofficial 16bit prequel has already been updated and uprated for 3DO. Vibrant new colours and exceptional 3D Studio animations complement its classic gameplay.

kept to the style of the in-game graphics, cool and simplistic, and so caused little disruption to the 'flow' of narrative and action. Here, however, the contrast is very much more marked and it could easily have jolted the player out of that immersive, cinematic feel. That it doesn't is thanks to the quite exceptional artistry of the sequences and their brilliantly incisive direction.

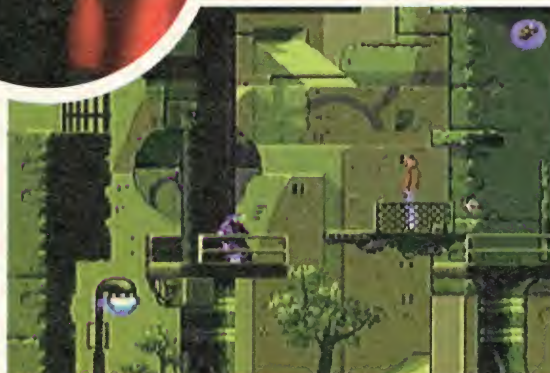
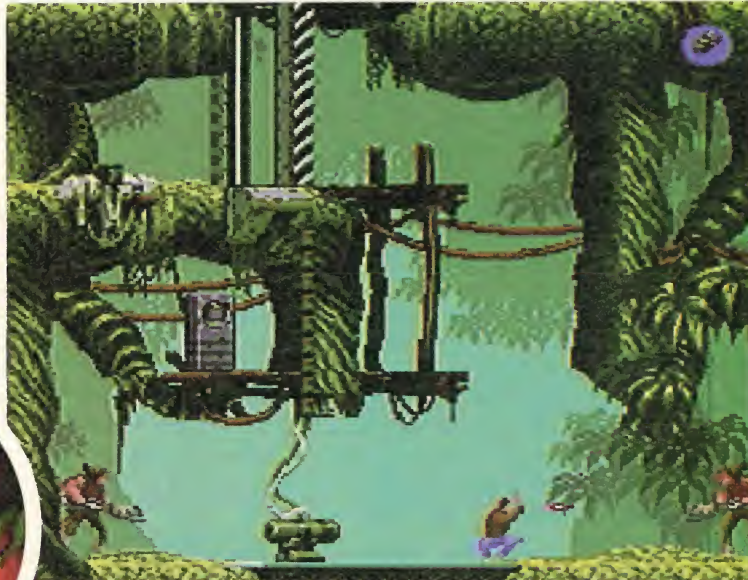
The storyline to *Flashback* borrows freely from a wide range of sci-fi films and books. You awaken in the artificial jungle of the planet Titan, with no memory of past events nor the circumstances which brought you to the place. A holocube lying nearby gives you an immediate goal – avoid or destroy all mutant guards and get yourself to New Washington, pronto. It's a bit like *Total Recall*, only unlike Schwarzenegger your first awkward movements will be far from agile, and your strength less than half that of those around you.



Fortunately, the first level starts you off simply, allowing you to get used to the novel sprite and its brilliant fluidity. As such the plot goes on hold, waiting until you've mastered the basics and can move on to the second level. This is set in New Washington, where the vibrant greens of the artificial rain forest give way to the drabness of a city that seems to be in permanent shad-

ow. Upon arrival you're greeted by an 'old friend', Ian, who straps you in a chair, presses a few knobs and brings back your memory – just like that! Recovering from amnesia has its price, however. Not only do you remember that the world is under threat from hostile aliens, it also dawns on you that *they* know you know their secrets – and they want you dead...

And so you start your quest to get back to Earth. Puzzles increase in frequency and cleverness the further you get, but there's also plenty of pixel-perfect platforming to pull off. Moreover, while your character's realistic animation adds to the game's atmosphere, occasionally it adds yet more trouble to your woes. When Conrad jumps down from one platform to another, for example, he stands vulnerable and a little stunned for a second before you can re-direct him. Should a mutant be waiting for him below –



Getting trapped by baddies and remote controlled weapons, above, demands instinctive use of the control system, crouching and squeezing off shots quickly. Later levels, left, feature huge chasms to negotiate, but clean up any sharp shooters before you leap!



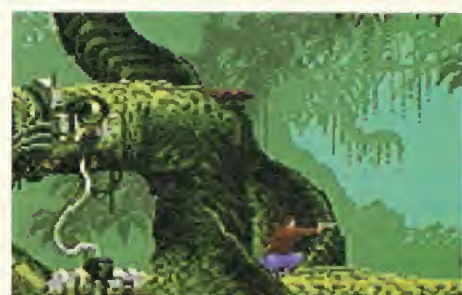
well... it's either one shield point gone, or Return To Go.

That *Flashback* is built up around being able to use the sprite correctly doesn't mean that once mastered, enjoyment disappears. The programmers continually

throw in complications in the form of power-ups, the most notable of which is a force field. While it's exceptionally useful when you want to climb up onto a platform occupied by a gun-toting alien, it also means that, effectively, you've been given the complications of a 14th move...

If you haven't yet played *Flashback* on any system before, it's still a very impressive title, particularly on 3DO. It has few modern day peers that can match its ability to hook the player like a guppy, while the in-game graphics remain attractive and involving. The lack of notably whizzy effects is more than compensated for by pure style whilst aurally, the game's a masterpiece with an involving soundfield of effects that varies for each level. My only reservation is that if you've played the game before, all the slick enhancements are only cosmetic and aren't enough by themselves enough to warrant purchasing it a second time – unless you just happen to want to own a classic slice of the videogame history pie. Recommended. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



Gex

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 3847774 **Developer:** Crystal Dynamics **Save Game:** 3 SRAM Slots **Price:** £46.95 **Available:** Now

G crystal Dynamics' flagship game, *Gex*, has been at the heart of the 32bit company for well over a year now with the original release date set for November 1994. In the event, it took another five months for Crystal to complete the game – not because of any unforeseen problems or set backs, but simply because they wanted everything to be perfect. Said Scott Steinburg, Marketing Director at the company: "We usually spend 12-14 months developing a specific product but we've been prepared to go over that with *Gex*. He's going to be the first 32bit platform character, the standard-bearer if you like, and the game's got to reflect that."

Of course there's a little more to it than merely the desire to produce the best platformer any 32bit system has seen. Part of the problem for everyone is that there's little left to do in the platform genre. While Nintendo's first SNES release, *Super Mario World*, was derided for its 8bit look the game was so huge, so packed with invention and originality that nothing since has really challenged it. *Gex* breaks out of the *SMW* trap in two ways. Firstly, it's got plenty of innovation itself. Our sucker-footed hero can not only clamber over every wall, ceiling and platform in sight, but he can also climb over many of the backgrounds. It might not sound a lot, but with plenty of other neat features it genuinely makes the game feel different.

Secondly, it sends itself up. Platformers have traditionally been aimed at kids – the faux-naive wonderland of *Mario* was a toddler's dreams made digital. Part of Sonic's impact was the spiky hairstyle, trainers and in-your-face attitude – a platformer for teens. Now *Gex* makes it okay for adults to like platformers. The game begins with Rez reaching through the TV screen to suck *Gex* into the game world and, from then on, constantly plays with the divide between reality and media. TV-style interference washes across every intro screen, it even seeps into gaps in the background graphics. Enemy sprites make self-conscious reference to games such as *Ghouls and Ghosts*, *Splatterhouse* and numerous other classics. In fact *Gex* doesn't only just poke fun at old games, but also the whole of 'popular media culture'. You'll find references to old US sit-coms ("Oh no! They're showing Rhoda again!") which justify Steinberg's talk of a "deep well of media references."

The storyline tells of *Gex* "Moving from Hawaii to the suburban sprawl of Encino, [where he] learns the fine art of television viewing, and promptly becomes

Crystal Dynamics' long awaited platform game has finally arrived and looks better than anyone could have hoped. Along with the startlingly original and athletic main sprite (fully rendered with Silicon Graphics workstations) comes stunning sound effects and a voice-over from comedian Dana Gould. The best platform game ever?



The superlative intro features the hipster couch potato being literally grabbed from his sofa by Rez and dropped into Medialand.



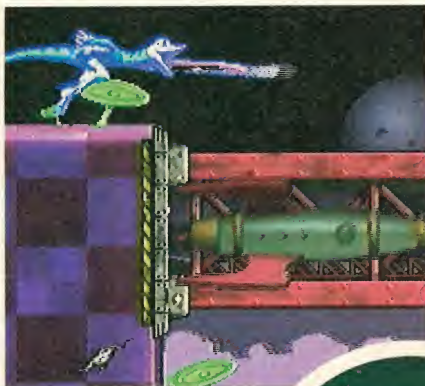
a TV sponge. As he sits watching the boob tube he's sucked into his television set by Rez, the chrome-coloured, insect-like ruler of 'Media Land'. Rez is in need of a new mascot for the Media Dimension – and wants *Gex* to be it."

The Media Dimension is composed of five theme based worlds. These include: Graveyard World (inspired by "Creature Features" from Abbot and Costello); Cartoon World (Jetsons meets Roger Rabbit); Jungle World (Indiana Jones) and Kung Fu World (late night cable Kung Fu Theatre shows, along with "Big Trouble In Little China"). All of these have their own multi-coloured 'world-screen' with pathways leading to 3-5 television sets that the player can go through (provided he has the requisite remote control secreted within an

earlier level). There's an abundance of secret rooms, bonus games and humongous bosses when you complete a world.

For real experts, there's an additional Planet X, made up of several exceptionally tough levels, which can only be reached if you get perfect on all the bonus games scattered through the game. The challenge begins, however, in the Graveyard World – a nether-region full of zombies, *Splatterhouse* sprites, bouncing tomatoes, deathly spikes and many more weird and wonderful entities. Naturally things start off fairly simply, the game allowing you to get used to *Gex*'s many attributes and skills, before that difficulty curve starts rising. Considering his size, it's impressive that Crystal have managed to make *Gex* so dextrous. As well as being able to cling to walls, *Gex* can use his tail for a whip – a highly satisfying

Highly Recommended
3DO
Magazine



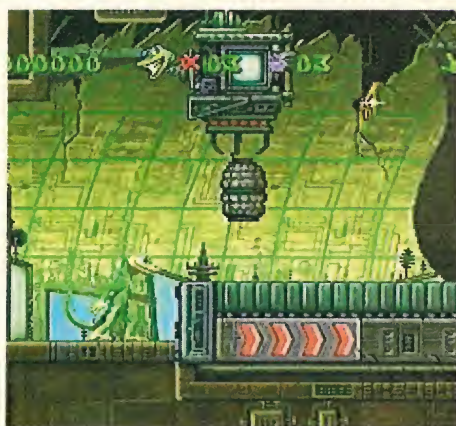
At the end of each level you'll find a TV screen, top left, that you have to go through to complete a level. Above, Gex under the influence of the freeze power-up. With it he can crystallise an opponent before thwacking him with his tail.



weapon – and his darting, gelatinous tongue for collecting power-ups. Look out for: sizzling electricity bolts, crackling fireballs, enemy freezing icicles and superspeed (complete with a beautiful speed-blur effect). In total, there's an incredible 450 frames of Silicon Graphics animation to make Gex the most realistic, believable platforming superstar yet.

The detail and artistry of Gex extends, in lesser form, to all of the other creatures that inhabit Media World. Each new world features its own peculiar, wittily inspired flora and fauna; Superheroes in Cartoon World; Sumos in Kung Fu World; Zombies in the Grave World and so on. Add all of the creatures from the different worlds together and you get a staggering array of highly varied sprites, each with their own particular powers, attributes and sound FX.

Added resonance is given by Dana Gould, the "hyperactive star" of US HBO comedy specials, who co-wrote his voice-over for Gex. Gould was hired to "bring the game to life with attitude and personality never before seen (or heard) in a video game". It's alleged there are some 400 soundbites, from 'Use the force, Luke' to 'Raise shields, Mr Sulu' and, per-



haps best of all, 'sorry Mr Presley' when hopping on gravestones!

Gex is without a doubt one of the most fun 3DO games yet. It's rare for a platform game to have strong enough graphics, originality and gameplay to stand out from such an incredibly competitive crowd. Gex does. The first classic platformer of the 32bit generation. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Captain Quazar

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA Developer: Cyclone Studios Save Game: 3 SRAM slots Price: £44.99 Available: Now

Whilst rival consoles like the PSX and Saturn are loudly delivering over hyped goods, all flashy visuals and no game-play, the 3DO is enjoying the untrammelled playability of its third-generation releases. *Captain Quazar* is a definitive arcade games elevated to greatness through sheer playability. The pet project of ex-3DO employee Helmut Kobler and 3DO gamehead Rich Shane, *Captain Quazar* succeeds most impressively through the sheer variety and sophistication of the game engine itself. Its solid, imaginative controls recalls the golden age of coin-ops when every other game wasn't a racer or a beat-'em-up. A time when games were fresh and fun...

The plot has futuristic supercop Quazar hunting down and bashing three mega crimelords, each of whom has their own personal planet. Each abode is suitably large, split into multiple levels, with tons of enemies, puzzles and traps. Aside from Pulzar for two-player mayhem, Quazar's most valuable ally in this mega quest is his mother of all guns, which can pepper bullets from the top barrel and missiles from the bottom. The power of this weapon is immense, catapulting Quazar back with its monumental kick-back, but control is easy, and by using the top shift buttons, you can rotate 360 degrees to spray a hail of bullets, or double click to fire in three directions simultaneously. Although buildings can be levelled with missiles, Quazar can also collect grenades, which cause really big explosions, and are handy for clearing dense areas around you. Bonus power-ups include speed boots, lasers, invisibility and regenerating armour.

Quazar immediately fulfils the first priority of an arcade classic then with a totally enjoyable, highly controllable main character. Extensive play rewards with many tricks and individual play styles to get the most out of your buddy, and, of course, the brilliant animation and characterisation of Quazar and Pulzar makes for immediate fun. Play is a joy from the kick off.

The second ingredient of a classic has to be structure, and here, again, *Quazar* is pretty damn faultless. The finished game has been radically tweaked so that it now features end level bosses to give a substantial rush to finishing areas. These range from comical (but ferocious) tanks to Walker robots and even a mini-Asteroids game! These are just the icing on the cake however, to already brilliant levels. Each planet has two to three levels, sprawling across various locations, so for example,

You know those trashy console ads where the machine blows up with the sheer power and excitement of the advertised title? Well, if one game is ever likely to fulfil this advertising cliché and blow up your TV, it's gonna be *Captain Quazar*, which offers quite possibly the fastest, most furious arcade action available anywhere...

on the first, desert planet run by Doobah, you must run around military installations destroying rockets loaded with spice before they launch, move to a more rural area to liberate slaves, and then enter the mining plant to destroy tunnelling machines and capture Doobah himself. Done? Well then you've got to get past the end-boss tank...

A relatively simple structure is made more complex by the size of the levels (they're large), and the use of teleporters (get passwords from freed hostages and traitors), mazes, lifts and secret rooms, all of which make the auto-mapping function essential. There's many objects to interact with, such as lava platforms to ride, whilst indiscriminate gunfire can cause chain explosions that decimate the whole playing area.

Collecting extra ammo, weapons, health (from dead baddies) and keys (for metal security doors) is essential and there's squillions of fabulous comic touches that show Cyclone's psychotic attention to detail. On the mining levels, tiny light bulbs provide poor illumination, and should you accidentally shoot any, they'll explode, plunging you into darkness. In two player mode, you'll find yourself using Pulzar to fire non-stop just to provide flickering illumination, although a lamp can be picked up which casts a brilliant light over your surroundings.

Enemy death routines provide a lot of the fun of the game too, and each baddie has their own, elaborate method of entering the spirit world. On the jungle planet, some roll over and decompose in three seconds flat, others turn to ashes, explode in fireballs or scatter body limbs around. And the sad-



The caverns in the belly of Jungle World offer some of the most ferocious action, most dramatically in the form of manic Quazar clones. Mining machines must be destroyed before you can confront terrorist crime lord Zang.

dest are those which ascend skyward with tragic, frightened eyes, as ethereal ghosts. Magical. Perhaps the most frightening foes are the clones of Quazar himself though. Lightening fast and with infinite supplies of ammo, these deliver punishing assaults, running around you like they're taking some of the spices they're helping export, and making life very, very hard. Plus, it can get tough for the second player to spot just which Quazar is his life-long buddie...

Quazar is a beautiful looking game, and reaching new areas is tremendously rewarding, since characters, gags and missions are all themed. Ox's mansion on the third and final planet is a marvelous work of architecture, with gardens and fountains combined with electrified floors and persistent, invisible henchmen. The earlier Lava levels feature seas of fire that must be traversed with floating rocks, whilst destroying special rocks that power a doomsday machine. And the sublime beauty of the jungle level conceals a deathly location plagued by poisonous plants, supercop eating sharks and plenty

Highly Recommended
3DO Magazine
Popcorn Award



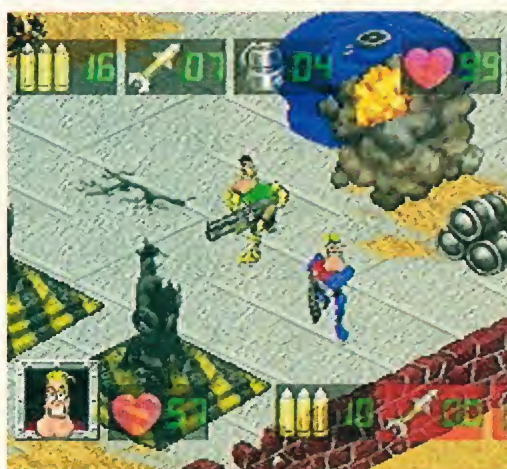
Above, clones fly to pieces when blasted. Below, Pulzar covers Quazar who lobbs a grenade on a prison. Don't expect any survivors!



more...

For most people *Quazar* will present a wondrous challenge, but like *Gex* no doubt some puritan veterans will moan it's half the size of some obscure, banal-looking 8bit release. These people will be in the minority though, such is the sheer variety and ingenuity of the various levels. The ferocity of the arcade action, its pace and splendid humour are beyond compare. They don't make arcade games like this any more, even in the arcades. With no slowdown, superb SGI sprites and that magical ingredient that makes it unputdownable, this is quite unmissable. If anyone ever suggests that the 3DO hasn't got arcade, feel good games to rival other consoles, just sit them down in front of *Captain Quazar*. You'll never hear another word. Except, where's the sequel? □ mcw

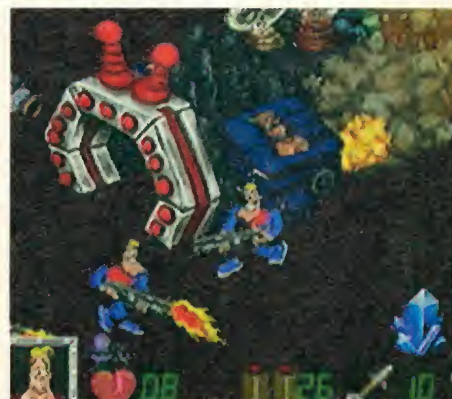
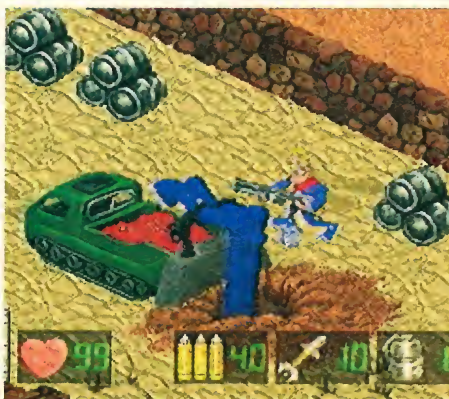
3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Top left, the fraught lava level. Above, a spice manufacturing plant packed with booty to collect. Left, rockets have been successfully torched before launch by Quazar and Pulzar. Below, a big problem.



Above, a spectacularly large chinched foe with a gun even bigger than yours gets too close for comfort in Ox's mansion. Below left, a planet being plundered. Lob a grenade and it's sorted...



Syndicate

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Bullfrog **Save Game:** 5 SRAM slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Important employee about to defect? Send the exec a message by having a team torch his wife with a flame-thrower. Allied agent about to be taken prisoner? Send in the cyborg boys and girls to blow his head off with Gauss guns. Videogames have never been renowned for their genteel manners, but *Syndicate* combines gruesome graphics with a noir vision comparable with any of its cinematic or literary inspirations.

Blade Runner is obviously the key text, itself a deft mix of borrowings from Metropolis and Philip K. Dick. *Syndicate*'s agents mirror the minimalist, trench coated 'anybodies' that Deckard represented, realistic anti-heroes who wander the streets inconspicuously, until they pull out a shotgun (or flame-thrower or minigun). Also 'borrowed' are the famous Spinners, in truth only the most obvious homage to Syd Mead's classic designs. There isn't a single graphic in this game which couldn't have been a prop in Blade Runner's LA 2019 and, unlike like most 'inspired' artists, Bullfrog have actually done justice to their source. The soft neon streetlights, the banal blipverts and scurrying citizens all contribute to creating an utterly believable game environment. The cheery distance between player and game fostered by most games, with their bright, surreal visuals, is here eroded to grim effect. The further you progress on a mission, the closer you get to your agents on their missions of assassination and subversion, hurrying to move in and out of each city with a minimum of fuss and maximum cool.

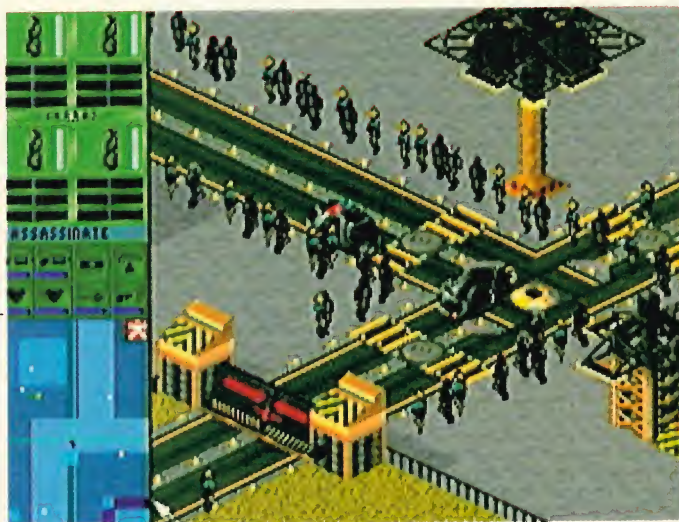
Probably the most impressive borrowing, however, is the dystopian scenario which envelopes the entire game with a gloomy, but viciously believable satire of capitalism run rampant. Evil corporations are a key plot motor of most cyberpunk novels, but *Syndicate* develops that vision to stunning new heights of depravity. In this future, Governments have been

In the long and bloody history of videogames, there's never been a game quite like *Syndicate*. Relentlessly ruthless, spectacularly bloodthirsty and entirely amoral, this is a game for the assassin in all of us.

overthrown and replaced by Syndicates (Mafias), each maintaining control of their territories by a mix of brainwashing and massive violence. It's a bold, nihilistic theme to wrap a game around, especially as you don't play any kind of saviour – unlike Deckard, there's no chance of redemption for your assassins. In fact the only difference between your syndicate and the rest is that it's smaller, making it that much harder to infiltrate and murder your way to world domination.

The first missions are exciting introductions to the game. Arm your cyborg team of four with as much weaponry and armour as possible. Divert some cash into R&D to research better cyborg parts for faster, stronger and more accurate agents. Check the mission brief and then wait for your agents to be deposited at the outskirts of an unsuspecting syndicate territory. At first, objectives are simple. Find and assassinate enemy agents, 'persuade' (brainwash) an enemy scientist, escort out a defecting employee – whatever, the relative brevity of these assignments mean you can play it calm and move in and out, quickly, or risk exposing your as yet undeveloped agents with more blood-thirsty, kill everything in sight tactics. There's no penalty for wiping out innocent bystanders!

Later missions feature increasingly complex scenarios. A small town is holding out against advertising campaigns you're transmitting. Find and destroy all the (heavily guarded) Syndicate lords to leave the airwaves open for your marketing boys. A diplomat is travelling through a syndicate territory today. Stake out assassination points along the police-lined route to kill him... More so than any other game, *Syndicate* has a phenomenal sense of narrative, each mission a well crafted sci-fi potboiler in its own right. It's this sense of true interaction with an entirely believable alternate world, glossed with stylish visuals and ultra



An official welcome for a government official, and his assassination promises to be spectacular. Sneak in, shoot and escape or kill everyone...

violence, that makes *Syndicate* such a deeply absorbing experience.

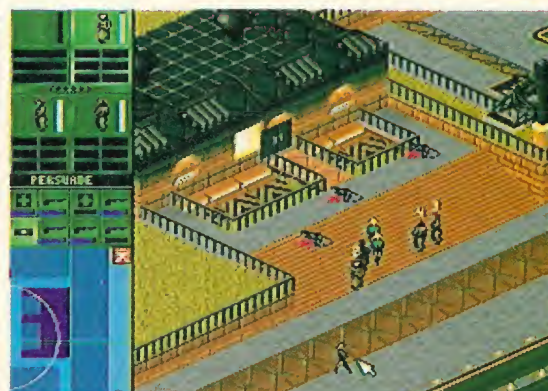
With infinite possible variations on the solution for each mission, transport routes to be sabotaged, documents to steal and scientists to 'persuade' and abduct, all spread across 50 mission, *Syndicate* is a serious gaming experience, that will reward strategists and arcade buffs in equal measure. Most enjoyable, is the superiority of the 3DO version, which eliminates the tedium of Amiga disc swapping, whilst delivering the stark design and graphic violence omitted from inferior console versions. The soundtrack has been substantially tweaked too, although, to be honest, I found it a distraction when firebombing enemy buildings and agents – fortunately, you can customise the sound setting on the front end.

My only serious complaint is that EA didn't encourage just a few more refinements to this fine conversion. The movement of your agents is still a little slow, like the Amiga original, but whilst it didn't seem to matter there with mouse control, joypad play feels a bit more lethargic.

These few niggles fail to detract from the near perfection of the game, however. A more stylish, involving, enjoyably British product you won't find – an unmissable experience. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★





A world to conquer, second above, and with strategy, tact and ultra-violence. Each mission brief is a skillfully worded, amusingly thinly veiled direction to cause maximum carnage, as demonstrated by your agents right, where a complex gets the heavy treatment. Far right, an early mission against a fairly wimpish syndicate where scientists are protected by timid guards. They're easily taken out by your four agents, wielding shotguns and two 'persuaded' citizens. Above, the creation of an agent, from casually wandering the streets to being run down and bio-mechanised.



Get to version 3 of all the 'borg parts, below, and you've got the fastest agents in the world.



Return Fire

Publisher: The 3DO Company © TBA **Developer:** Silent Software **Save Game:** 1 SRAM Slot **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Like all the best games, *Return Fire* revolves around a beautifully simple premise – annihilate your opponent – around which is built engagingly complex intricacies that beg to be explored and mastered. The most immediately impressive aspect is undoubtedly the graphics. 32-bit technology allows a revolutionary break from the pre-drawn landscapes of games such as *Syndicate* and *Cannon Fodder* which, in static screenshots, may look similar. In motion, it's instantly obvious *Return Fire's* landscape is being generated on the fly, a true 3D environment with a viewpoint which automatically zooms in or out depending on your speed.

The authenticity of the spiralling landscape means that the terrain is usable – you can actually shelter behind buildings and creep up on opposing forces. Some of the buildings are also 'interactive' – the player can re-fuel at oil installations, or pick up ammo at special bases. Moreover, everything is up for being reduced to rubble – it's great fun levelling an enemy city in this way, especially in two-player mode, your devastating effect mirrored on your opponents crumpled face as you destroy his buildings, run over his (populated) tents and waste his forces.

Sound is almost equally stunning. As a brilliant intro sequence makes clear, the game is presented in full Dolby Surround Sound and, even in mere stereo, the various effects are excellent. The whup-whup of a helicopter's rotors, the slight whistle in a tank's catapillar tracks – it adds immensely to the game's atmosphere. Then there's the music, no feeble synth-pop for this game but CD-streamed, militaristic classical music such as *The Ride Of The Valkyries*. The recordings are licensed from EMI's classical music division and, even if you don't normally like such music, work brilliantly here.

Below, a plane's been downed above your APV. Right, a chopper is ready to launch. It's the most difficult craft to control, but the fastest and good for checking out where trouble is likely to occur.



Dazzling 3-D technology, four awesomely powerful attack-vehicles, epic two-player games and battlefields more lethal than anything faced by Schwarzenegger have made *Return Fire* Studio 3DO's bestselling game yet.

It's gameplay, however, which is the real strong point of *Return Fire*. Every game pits the green forces against the brown, irrespective of whether you're playing a one or a two-player game. Each side must send out a chosen vehicle (tank, APV, jeep or chopper) to battle through enemy defences in search of the opponent's flag tower. The flag must then be returned (only the jeep can be used to actually recover it) to the Allied base to secure victory.

Naturally though, it isn't that easy. Enemy battlements are huge, heavily defended mazes full of missile-firing turrets and gun-toting helicopters. The flag tower is often found right at the centre of enemy forces, accessible only after intense battles. Mines are every where you don't expect them to be, destroying your tank/whatever in one mighty explosion. Your opponent, moreover, may well have decided to abandon his search for your flag and just be gunning for you – chasing you down long, stretching roads in his gunship copter.

Vehicle selection is the most important immediate concern at the beginning of each game, but this is fairly simple at first. It's best to use the helicopter to recon the area, discovering where the enemy flag tower is so that you can determine the fastest, most



The extraordinary zooming and scrolling of *Return Fire* is best demonstrated when your new vehicle rolls out of storage. The camera zooms in close as your tank rolls onto the tarmac, before smoothly pulling back to give a wide view of any enemies. This looks like no game ever seen on a console.

efficient route to get there. Unfortunately, helicopters aren't the most effective vehicles to use against enemy battlements so, once you've worked out your route, it's best to fly back to your base and replace your craft with a tank or APV and blast a path to the flag. The APV is particularly effective at destroying airborne enemies, but both are excellent at punching a hole through the enemy's line, leaving the way fairly clear for your weak, poorly armed jeep to grab the flag and speed back.

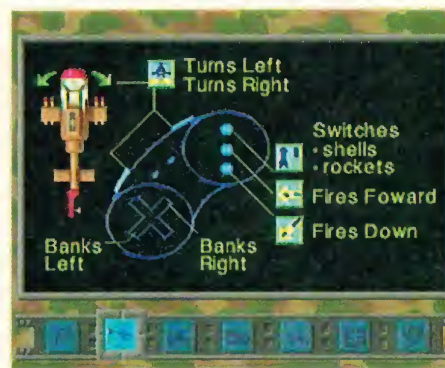
The various techniques are brilliantly introduced via an interactive instruction manual and easy-peasy early missions. As you progress, the battlefield gets ever bigger with massed enemy defence installations and numerous islands linked by fragile bridges. The various vehicles all have their own characteristics, with APVs able to drop mines and tanks having rotating gun turrets, which take time to master. The real challenge, however, is learning how to use your forces for each individual strategic challenge.

In single player mode, the enemy does without tanks, APVs and jeeps, instead relying on static defences and attack copters to wipe out your offensive capabilities – all your vehicles, basically. This is still good fun, but the game is arranged oddly. There





Destroying helicopters and jets is enjoyably satisfying (left). Instead of just disintegrating, their charred remains fall dramatically to the ground (or sea). If you've been blasted, it's back to the bunker



are nine tiers, each with about four levels, but you're allowed to progress to the next group if you beat just one level. Getting to the end won't take that long. Completing every single level will take longer, but there's no particular reward for doing so. In one-player mode, the technically inferior *Syndicate* or *Cannon Fodder* provide a better thought out and more substantial challenge.

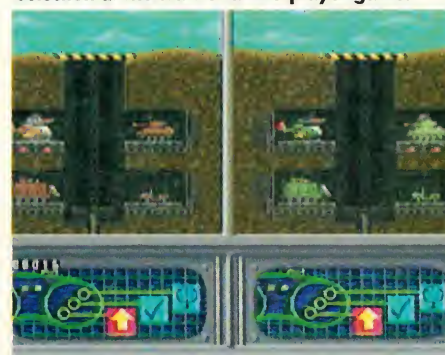
To get the most out of *Return Fire* you really have to play it two-player mode. Pick one of the huge later levels and you're set for a truly epic battle. Multiple fake flag towers, amphibious jeeps, grenade-lobbing (but squishable) troops and the ability to move your flag if it's uncovered, mean battles can go on for ages. The balance between attack

and defence, the way you use the various vehicles to best effect (some times even blowing one up for a prompt return to base) gives you plenty of scope for developing your own tactics.

There can be no doubt that two player games vital to a platform's success and the 3DO has an incomparable collection of them. To this very impressive list, which includes games such as *SSFI-IX*, *John Madden*, *Captain Quazar* and *BattleSport*, Silent Software has added a brilliant arcade-strategy shoot-'em. If you've a mate with an interest in tactics and blowing things up, *Return Fire* should be bought immediately! □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Above, a clip from the excellent interactive instruction manual. Below, limited supplies of jeeps, tanks, APVs and jeeps available for selection at the start of a two-player game.



Cannon Fodder

Publisher: Virgin © 0181 3682255 **Developer:** Sensible Software/Krisalis **Save Game:** 4 SRAM slots **Price:** £34.99 **Available:** Now

Sensible Software's *Cannon Fodder* can be seen as something of a true classic, first appearing on the humble Amiga just two years ago. Since then it's put itself about, appearing on just about every conceivable platform where there's been a quantifiable number of end users (and sometimes even when there's not – the flailing CD32 receiving its copy last year). One thing that's remained constant throughout is the reception that it's received – universal critical and commercial success.

Exactly why *Cannon Fodder* has engendered such heady praise isn't hard to appreciate once you've played the game. It's got that distinctive Sensible look and feel – a top-down view, this time centring on various battlefields in tropical jungles, Arctic wastelands, and red, sandy deserts. It's also got those Sensi Soccer-style stars, minute sprites rich in character, this time regaled in military wares, complete with grenades, guns and missiles.

On the PC and Amiga movement of these sprites was controlled by means of a mouse – the player simply clicked where he wanted to go and the little troopers scurried to the chosen destination. For the 3DO the control mechanism has had to be transferred to the joypad, and it's been expertly done, for once the swapping of devices has resulted in not just an equally intuitive mechanism, but one that's even better, with weaponry easier to access, and the whole thing infinitely less fiddly.

The aim of the game, in case you hadn't guessed, is to use your troopers to wipe out the enemy in a game of guerrilla war. Mission goals fall into three types: destroy all enemy; destroy all buildings; destroy all buildings *and* all enemies. It's that sophisticated. Fortunately the means to achieving these goals often does require serious strategy. Everything starts simply enough – the first level is over in a matter of seconds with just four soldiers to kill. By the fourth level, however, the sage gamer will have split his forces up, one to recon the area, the others to provide cover – and also to ensure that the whole squad is not all wiped out by a single grenade.



Although the British Legion offending hype made tabloid headlines, Cannon Fodder is anything but another mindless shoot-'em-up. Gameplay is brilliantly original, while an SGI intro makes clear the developers' 'little guy' sympathies.

Given the large number of levels (72 in all) the simplistic mechanics of gameplay might suggest increasing drudgery of repetition. However, that feeling never comes. In part this is because this is one of those games where you're not given much opportunity to think – like *Doom* the action is *unrelenting*. It's also because there's real freedom here, with a myriad of ways to complete a particular level. As well as allowing more creativity in play, the freedom also results in a much tougher challenge. There are many levels that require repeated attempts to complete, frustration countered only by the intense desire the game generates to succeed in getting to the next level.

Upon its arrival on the PC, praise for gameplay was muted only by the vain concern that Sensible had failed to update the game – failed to use the machine's extra horsepower for extra visual effect. It's a criticism that could be levelled at this version also. To it, however, Sensi Software have a simple answer – why change a winning formula?

Why indeed. *Cannon Fodder* is one of those select games that manages to encapsulate the elixir of gameplay perfectly within its binary walls. The 3DO may have a new, improved, whiter than white intro and, of all things, a video to go with the bonus soundtrack, "War has never been so much fun", but the in-game graphics have been left pretty much intact. But then so what? It would be hypocritical for us to criticise the lack of next generation visuals when we're continually bemoaning their use to cover up a lack of gameplay. *Cannon Fodder's* minimalist graphics work brilliantly well, the overhead perspective and course landscape providing a near perfect setting for a game of guerrilla war – so why should anyone complain?

Well, *Return Fire* is one reason. Silent Software's brilliant *Cannon Fodder* style war game showed it was possible to combine gameplay with 32bit visuals, featuring an extraordinary graphical style that provided beautifully intricate polygon buildings that weren't just candy to the eye, but truly interactive objects. *Cannon Fodder's* simplicity, it must be said, is part of its charm, but nevertheless Sensible could



have done a lot more, visually, that wouldn't have damaged gameplay in any way. The 3DO version is an improvement over both its Amiga and PC counterparts – but only slightly. Krisalis have used the extra colours the 3DO allows to provide a landscape that oozes colour. Sprites are more animated – especially the birds that fly overhead – but it's minor stuff really. *Cannon Fodder* stands, as it always has done, upon its gameplay.

So with only slight reservations **3DO Magazine** can recommend the game as one that everyone should have – it truly is one of the most playable games of all time. Naturally, lurking not so far from the surface of the game is a strong undercurrent of humour, with Sensible's digs at sacred cows of restraint and good taste. Some of the sprites that you shoot don't die immediately, instead linger for an age, shrieking as blood spurts out of their jerking body. Yet at the same time, the personalisation of your troops with names such as Rusty, Spike and Daisy (!), means it's incredibly easy to get attached to your squad as they gain experience, rank and skills. All too often, you'll complete a level only to restart it to make sure good old Bob avoids getting turned into a blood-spouting mess. It's always been Sensible's magic to imbue the tiniest of sprites with more character than most digitised Hollywood actors. In *Cannon Fodder*, they've done it again, glossing a great game with more personality and humour than mere screenshots can convey. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Although the white 'car', left, looks as though it's simply floating across the water, it's actually just taken off from a ramp and is flying through the air. When it lands it will squash the stationary, heavily armed enemy on the left bank.



For your enjoyment (?) to go along with the game Sensible Software have produced their very own song based on Cannon Fodder's by-line: "War has never been so much fun", combined with their own silly video, right.



Mazer

Publisher: American Laser Games © TBA Developer: ALG Save Game: No Price: £TBA Available: TBA

Watch someone else play *Mazer* and you can see what the developers dreamt of. Rather than cute cartoony sprites, digitised actors and CGI-rendered enemies. Rather than a fixed perspective, a shifting view which zooms in or out to keep track of two-player action. Rather than a slideshow of cartoony graphics, an epic FMV intro...

Once the intro fades, you're given a choice of four characters for a one or two-player game. The game itself is split into eight main locations, doubled to sixteen via limited reworking. There's also a bonus



Alien invaders have – at last! – invaded Earth. They're called the Semag-Resal and their military bases are secretly working on human cyborgs to wipe out any resistance such as, uh, you. Can you defeat the aliens and free their human guinea pigs?

game where players can earn power-ups by running about a somewhat maze-like level for a few seconds. Get to the exit before time runs out and the power-ups are kept. Fail, and they're lost. The final level is a confrontation with the maker of the cyborgs.

In-game there are a host of special effects, a turbo-run feature is particularly neat with the character leaving behind fading, semi-transparent duplicates of himself as he runs.

There's also a fairly decent rock guitar soundtrack under the crunching sound effects.

The problem with *Mazer* is, simply, gameplay. One of the main attractions of *Gauntlet* games is the huge sprawling mazes which players can enjoy exploring. *Mazer's* title suggests the developers once knew this, but as the main levels in *Mazer* consist of a single room with a few, destructible walls it seems funds ran out before they could implement it. Inside *Mazer's* claustrophobically small levels, combat is fast and frantic – but not fun.



Claustrophobia is guaranteed in *Mazer*, which, in moments of doubt over concept, appears to have aspired to the maxim of total overkill – masses of baddies, explosions, 'action' and no time to think about the cod gameplay. Attractive SGI sequences (left) don't help much.

The Volcano level is some kind of monument to this folly of art-led game design. At a distance it looks great. Focus in during gameplay and the brash graphics merge together into a Rorschach inkblot test. If you concentrate, you can win through – but it's an ordeal rather than a pleasure.

Time after time, people who'd been stopped in their tracks by *Mazer's* visuals would wander away in utter disappointment after playing it. "I hope you totally trash it," being one of the more printable comments. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★

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Zhadnost *The People's Party*

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA Developer: Studio 3DO Save Game: No Price: £34.99 Available: Now

Twisted established Studio 3DO as genuinely innovative developers, but its panache, irreverent attitude and sheer originality marginalised it in a market dominated by more easily categorised titles. Over a year later, it still rates as one of the most creatively designed and professionally produced games around. It's only possible rival is *Station Invasion*, the Studio 3DO follow up which uses the same, cutting edge approach with dazzling FMV pasted into a surreal computer game-board. A benchmark edutainment title, it lampoons soaps as effectively as *Twisted* mocks gameshows. A third title in the series promised much to get excited about for fans of the eclectic.

It's disappointing then that whilst tremendous fun, *Zhadnost* fails to develop the genre as effectively as its predecessors. The format is almost identical to *Twisted*, with two to four players exercising their wits on FMV jigsaw puzzles, general knowledge quizzes, audio-visual memory tests and concentration games to win time on the main 'interactive' board game. It's here that money is won, the player with the most cash winning freedom to emigrate from Bizarnia and, even, to have their fondest dream come true. From running for President to becoming a rock star or soap king, the secret fantasies of the communist contenders are laid bare. These egocentric fantasies are depicted in an outstanding opening sequence, with petty crook Zygi Nada's blackmailing election campaign rating as the most hilarious. However, these amusing characterisations are fairly limited in the game itself, being mainly confined to the winner of a round earning an FMV update on their favourite, outrageous fantasy.

In truth, the game never comes close to matching the bravura opening sequence for gags. Whilst gameshows (*Twisted*) and soaps (*Station Invasion*) are easily satirised, the East/West twist of *Zhadnost* is more limited. The characters pose and gesticulate wildly, but don't really develop and never approach the out-and-out weirdness of Uncle Fez. The more sombre tone is also reflected in the visuals. Although the sets and constructions are beautiful, the fabulous, day glo tackiness of *Twisted* is sorely missed, replaced by muted greens and shadowy recesses that impress rather than seduce. And this minimalist beauty encroaches on the direction as well. Whereas *Twisted* had a huge variety of angles and cutaways to create an illusion of a seamless, fast edited TV show, *Zhadnost* relies on just three or four camera positions, cutting mechanically between them and seldom providing close ups of the players.

Bizarnia doesn't provide much inspiration for gameplay either. None of the puzzles have a dis-

Imagine a gameshow where you don't play for points and prizes, but for your very freedom. Set in the People's Republic of Bizarnia, *Zhadnost* is a dizzying parody of 1950s Communism and gameshow capitalism, garnished with state-of-the-art 3DO multimedia. Question is, which is more insane?



Mad hosts, above, and even madder contestants. Clockwise from left, Ivana Borchnik, cellist, wants to be a rock star, chief of secret police Ivan Kropotkin dreams of being a sitcom star, scientist Grushenka Ruble fancies her chances as a top fashion designer and transsexual Ludmilla Pectoralvich pictures herself as Miss America...

tinctly Bizarnian theme and are, in fact, mostly mildly reworked versions of the subgames in *Twisted* and *Station Invasion*. Even more surprising is the relative mundaneness of the format itself. *Twisted*'s spiral staircase not only provided a great visual hook for the game, but allowed for some neat snakes and ladders reversals. *Zhadnost*, by contrast, simply has the characters four abreast behind consoles which clock up money earned.

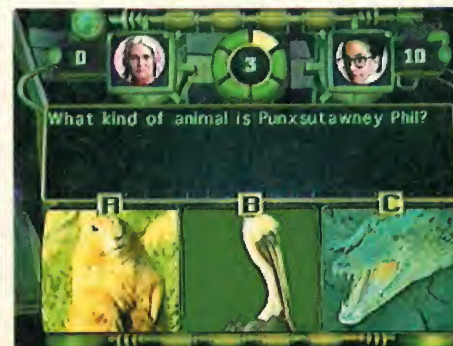
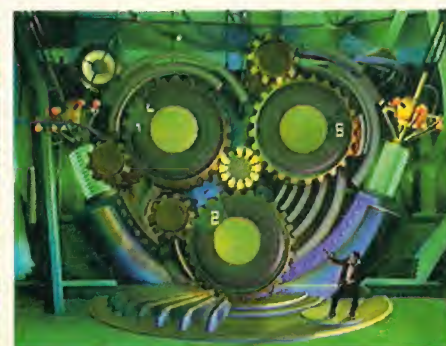
In part, these criticisms highlight the stunning originality of Studio 3DO's previous efforts more than the failure of *Zhadnost* itself, and will have little impact on novices to the genre, unaccustomed to *Twisted*'s compulsive brilliance. Viewed in its own

right, there's no doubt that *Zhadnost* is entertaining enough, with brilliant graphics, great sound and top-notch acting, and there's few other games you can get three friends around to join in. Also, it offers the significant innovation of a simultaneous two-player mode on almost all the subgames. Some people will find this element alone makes it significantly superior to *Twisted*. For myself, however, I found the atmosphere much less entertaining and enjoyable. If Studio 3DO are to extend their innovative trilogy further, they need to return to the originality and humour which made the prequels so fresh. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



Above, the contestants groove. Left, potential wannabe President Vladimir Zygi Nada slicks back his hair and threatens to do some damage. "It would be a shame if somethin' was to happen..." Right, the technically impressive money round. Below right, one of many Pythonesque, match the sound/picture rounds, made more enjoyable by simultaneous two to four player action.



PaTaank

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics © 0171 9730011 Developer: P.F. Magic Save Game: No Price: £39.99 Available: Now

The innovation of *PaTaank* is that the action is viewed from behind your pinball, with the table rotating at a blisteringly fast rate around you. There are no flippers to push you up, rather, your craft has an internal supply of thrust velocity (which is finite) that you must use to propel you towards your chosen area of the table. Initially, this rapid screen updating is bewildering, especially as all the pinball tables are littered with huge FMV monitors, projecting junk MTV style footage relevant to the theme of the table in play. But after a few minutes concentrated play, the bizarre concept is grasped, and you soon begin to understand the game mechanics.

There are three tables; Luv, Surf and Disaster, each brilliantly rendered and themed, with tunnels of love to be entered, rubber sharks to avoid, letter sequences to be activated and the aforementioned video walls to watch for advice and tips. These video walls give the game a Zoo TV look, quite unlike anything I've seen before in a videogame.

The tables can either be played individually, or tackled in the full game – where all three are inter-

Like the innovative *Twister*, *PaTaank* is another odd-ball, U.S.P. release, guaranteed to challenge even the most seasoned games-player's senses. It's pinball, but not quite as you know it...

connected, and accompanying these tables are some of the most impressive soundtracks yet heard on the 3DO system, each theme packed with samples and riffs that inject a megadose of excitement to the already surreal experience.

The chief problem with *PaTaank* is that it's so incredibly tough to guide your pinball (even with tilt and thrust), that precise play is exceptionally tricky, and frustrated players may find themselves ricocheting all over the place, lost in a visual explosion of bizarre taste. It's like being lost in a high tech shopping centre at Christmas. On roller-skates. On acid. And whilst the tables present are brilliantly designed (particularly Disaster, with monitors blinking a plethora of apocalyptic sequences), there isn't really enough to satisfy for long, the small size of the game adding to the feeling that *PaTaank* is more of



an experiment than a fully fledged game in its own right. Nevertheless, it's an excellent showcase for both the technical ability of the 3DO system and the superb visual artists at P.F. Magic. Expect cult success. ☐ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Real Pinball

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 Developer: In-house Save Game: High scores only Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Every console needs a pinball game (or so I'm told), but with this and *Paatank* as the 3DO system's entrants, it's safe to say we haven't got one yet. *Real Pinball* boasts a 'real' 3D view of each of its five tables, but whereas *Paatank* is perhaps too innovative for its own good, *Real Pinball* fails in exactly the opposite way. The fore-shortened perspective is a stupidly literal rendering of a pinball table. While it may look realistic, details at the top of the table are difficult to see and it makes play confusing. The flat, vertically scrolling

Despite their low-tech origins, pinball tables both real and simulated are enormously popular with ever more elaborate designs and sound effects.

format that has served every machine from Spectrum to PC Engine perfectly well has been discarded for the sake of gimmickry, and hence *Real Pinball* plays like a dog.

This graphical cock-up might have made some sense if the programmers had provided some imaginative table designs. Instead you're offered the most unexciting tables imaginable, each decorated by ethereal, mythological Japanese clap trap that's completely uninspiring. Lacklustre visuals which are perfectly matched by blippy tunes and unexciting sound effects.

The final icing on the cake is that the game doesn't even manage to play fast. The pinball rolls around like a ten ton cannonball while your flippers flip like they're made of lead rubber. The potential for a truly spectacular pinball game on the 3DO system is vast, but this doesn't come close and is easily eclipsed even



by Kirby's *Pinball* on the GameBoy. Pinball addicts, then, would be advised to wait for part three of the pinball saga, as sadly, no-one seems to have tackled properly yet. ☐ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★



Shanghai Triple Threat

Publisher: Activision © 0181 7429400 Developer: In House Save Game: Password Price: £39.99 Available: Now

This oriental variation on dominoes, invented at the turn of the century, is a popular game for gamblers across the world, and variations on it have appeared on most consoles through the years (Activision's SNES adaptation was very popular). Whilst fans of the game will be pleased that Activision are launching a 3DO version, they may be disappointed at the fairly tame version on offer here, with none of machine's capabilities stretched to enhance this visually undramatic board game. With so many visually outstanding, innovative re-workings of tried and tested game types on the 3DO (*Road Rash*, *John Madden*, *Fifa International* etc.), owners have justifiably become expectant of superlative eye-candy on even the most jaded genre releases. But if you have a puzzle game of the stunning simplicity and addictiveness of, say, *Tetris*, lame aesthetics can be forgiven, and the *Shanghai* series of games certainly has the world fame to build high expectations in novices.

At the beginning of a basic game, 144 tiles appear on screen, some on top of each other in up to four piles. Although initially, all these tiles will be bunched together, later on, small islands dissipate to the corners of the screen. Each tile has a symbol (traditional mode offers the usual Mah-Jong pattern, but Zodiac icons, musical instruments or flags of the world can be selected, according to which is easiest on the eye). The object of the game is to identify and

Simultaneous two-player games are always welcome to alleviate the solitary pastime of gaming, and this cult Activision puzzler is as welcome on 3DO as it's been on previous systems.

select two matching tiles, causing them to vanish, a total absence of tiles resulting in Game Over. The difficulty is that only unblocked tiles can be selected – those that are either on the outside edge and not partially covered or any tile that can move left or right without disturbing another – and whilst this premise takes a while to grasp (for me at least), it soon becomes instinctive, and you merrily lower levels and disintegrate tiles until you suddenly can't find any more matching ones, and get stuck again. Pairs must be selected strategically, as dissolving unimportant tiles can leave top layer blocks fixed, covering a pyramid below and effectively jamming progress. To make life easier, there are three undo credits available, and should you fluff up and completely foil progress, you can re-shuffle all the tiles and carry on. An arcade mode makes things more difficult, by shuffling neighbouring tiles into the space of any dissolved pairs, effectively mutating the pattern at every turn.

In one-player mode, you can struggle away at your own pace, or try to progress against a time limit (which is tough). Each level completed moves you on to another background, the ultimate aim being to navigate across the 30 levels that make up the Great Wall Of China, the monochromatic stills of which provide the background to the action.

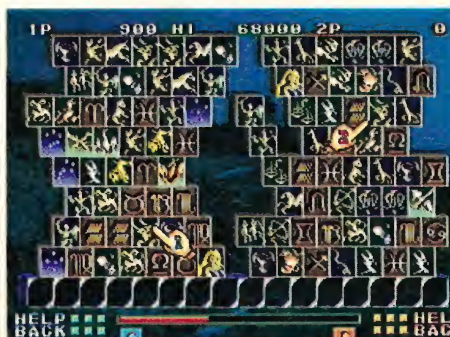


This package has drawn together a wide range of *Shanghai* variations though, to provide the most comprehensive console 'dedication' to the game ever, and a good value package for puzzle fans. As well as the arcade and original mode, there are four different tile games, Beijing, Great Wall, Golden Tile or Classic Shanghai. Beijing features sliding tiles, Great Wall has tiles falling from the top of the screen to replace matched pairs and Golden Tiles has, well, a hidden, golden tile which must be reached first.

Whilst all are good fun in single player mode, it's with two players that *Shanghai Triple Threat* really comes into its own, providing the sort of simple, utterly addictive and competitive play that prevents you from leaving it alone. There's no doubt that this could have been radically re-worked for 3DO, with more interesting tile patterns and flashier backgrounds, but it's arguable that the engrossing format demands some restraint. And whilst the tiny patterns can become an eyesore, all in all this is an enjoyable package that's a must-have for puzzle fans. It's also recommended for anyone with two joypads and a friend who wants some intense competition. Puzzlers traditionally get a rough deal due to their inevitable lack of visual sumptuousness, but *Shanghai Triple Threat* has a strong enough source game design to lift it above more transient novelty titles, and if you can be persuaded to taste its distinctive oriental flavour, you should be engrossed for a very long time. □ mcw



It's all rather daunting at first – whichever symbols you choose, there always seems to be far too many.



3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Magazine

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Twisted

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Studio 3DO **Save Game:** No **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

There have been gameshow games before, but they've usually consisted of a bunch of sad graphics replicating a drab TV show's set, plus a series of text questions pulled out of a tiny database. *Twisted* is different. *Twisted* uses the 3DO system to such effect it looks better than most real TV shows.

The basic objective for you, and up to five friends, is to get to the top of a spiral staircase. Players take turns to stop a random number generator – videogame dice – and then get a challenge to see if they can throw again.



Twisted is perhaps the most innovative and intriguing game for the 3DO system yet. Could this be the future of game show?

Challenges are weird. Like, there's FMV footage of a trolley being whizzed about a supermarket. When it finishes, you must select items that weren't in the trolley. Then there's a game sort of like 'match the picture', only it's sounds instead, and



sounds apparently voiced by ex-Presidents at that. Another game wittily has you in a TV show-room, zapping TVs as ads come on – but don't hit that 3DO ad! One challenge is a sliding tile variant, only the tiles pictures are parts of FMV movie. All of this is wrapped up in some great presentation complete with a smarmy FMV host, hostess and player characters who give you plenty of lip if you mess up.

There's no real one-player mode, but that's fair enough as *Twisted* only really comes into its own with plenty of people crowded around, jostling for



position and mocking/applauding each other's efforts. Without them the various challenges can get a bit repetitive, while the various trivia questions are unduly irksome due to their American bias. Nevertheless this is an intriguing game and a great party piece. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Soccer Kid

Publisher: Krisalis © 01709 372290 **Developer:** In-house **Save Game:** 5 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

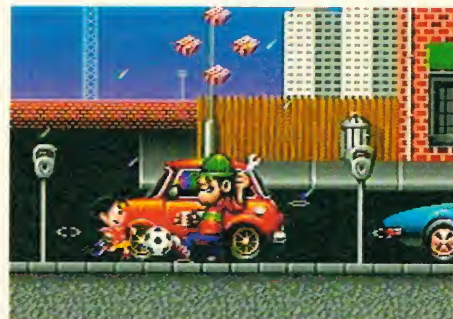
The most remarkable thing about *Soccer Kid* is its control system. While most developers seeking to oust *Mario* go overboard on graphics, Krisalis have actually spent time thinking out the gameplay. The FMV told story – with aliens stealing the World Cup, crashing and scattering the pieces across Earth – may be silly, but the footie idea is the springboard for a great character. The Kid isn't just another platformer in football strip (which you select at the start), but a footie maniac with a whole repertoire of ballsy stunts.



While Amiga platformers are usually dire, Soccer Kid is one of a select few exceptional to that rule. The 3DO version is undoubtedly the best yet.

Can't reach that high up platform? – jump on the ball for a superjump. Bonus item protected by fiendish spikes? – boot the ball through to collect it for you. There's even a whole range of useless stunts, such as heading the ball, which are there simply for fun (and to rack up bonus points). But most of all the ball is used to take out enemies both in the air and on the ground. Striking the ball at right angle requires more skill and timing than most football sims. While at first it all seems a bit tricky, with practise the amount of control possible is amazing which is, after all, what interactive gaming is all about.

Although the character is among the best around, early levels are disappointingly linear with London providing a rather drab opening to the game. This is all the more pronounced because the 3DO version is pretty much identical to the Amiga A1200 version. The graphics seem a bit sharper and more colourful, they certainly move faster, but apart from that and



plenty of sampled speech it's basically the Amiga game. As you progress the levels do get markedly more imaginative and challenging, but this isn't the game to wow your mates with. What it is is a remarkably playable and enjoyable platformer with a huge challenge. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Gridders

Publisher: The 3DO Company © TBA **Developer:** Tetragon **Save Game:** 1 SRAM Slot **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

While the environmentally-minded intro fully conforms to puzzler traditions – being short, weak and entirely unrelated to the actual game – the presentation in-game is a revelation. The flat, insipid 2D visuals and bippy-boppy soundtracks of old have been replaced by a heavy-duty graphics engine – with both board and game blocks realised as texture-mapped polygons – and genuinely good CD soundtracks. Screenshots do little justice to how smoothly and quickly the blocks keep moving, all with crunching good sound FX. What's more, this isn't some old puzzler tarted up with new graphics, but a genuine attempt to produce a new style of game. As you progress, the levels become multi-tiered with lifts, canyons and so forth providing a truly 3D experience.

The prime objective of the game is collecting gems, usually secreted within moving blocks. To get the gems out you have to stop the blocks moving, which is rarely simple as many blocks keep tumbling even if you stand in their way. So you have to find other blocks to block, building a pile-up stopping the blocks you want. Then you have to scurry over to

Puzzlers are renowned for their dire presentation and unimaginative visuals, a cliché Tetragon aim to smash with help from the 3DO system's powerhouse chipset.

collect the gems before more blocks arrive to crush them. Later on it gets far more complex, but a little robotic dog provides an unlikely accomplice, barking when you're near a useful point.

36 levels make for a sizeable challenge, but ironically its graphic flair is as much a hindrance as an advantage. While the game looks good close-up you can't see that much of the board – so you have to zoom out and watch from a distance. This isn't that much more fun than 2D graphics, especially as it's often more confusing which, in turn, helps make the game logic overly convoluted. Classic puzzlers begin very simply and easily, setting out the clear principals later to be complicated by fiendish kinks. *Gridders* never provides that hook, it's too off-kilter right from the start, although there are at least plenty of imaginative additions to complicate things later on for addicts.

Overall, despite all its efforts I'm afraid this is



another puzzler unlikely to break out of its ghetto making for that classic puzzler finishing line: it's okay and if you like this sort of thing, you'll probably love this. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Battle Chess

Publisher: Interplay © 01235 821666 **Developer:** Krisalis **Save Game:** 8 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Battle Chess was always the perfect example to cite against those who claimed videogames were mindless. Take one admired, but initially difficult to get into strategy game and apply state-of-the-art audiovisuals. Each move has the pieces brought to life with slick animation routines, while taking a piece triggers a comical set-piece animation sequence. The game is made even more accessible with the range of squares a piece can move to being highlighted when it's selected. And when you've got so experienced with the game you can't



After causing a sensation on the Amiga with its inspired mix of superb animation and serious chess logic, Battle Chess has been converted to every new format since.

be bothered with the fancy presentation, there's a straight 2D board to play on as well.

The 3DO version's main advantage is its use of the RISC CPU to make the computer player both faster and tougher to play against. The long waits of the Amiga version have been radically cut down, while the combat sequences now feature a zoom-in mode to make them more dramatic. However, while the new animations are a big improvement on the Amiga game, they don't push the 3DO system in the way the original game pushed the Amiga. It's a particular shame that the game keeps the old fixed perspective, which does tend to have the pieces obscuring the board, rather than offering the ability to pan about. Powers Kingdom's graphic engine, offering a host of stunning cinematic effects and rotating the entire landscape about, would've been perfect for a



great 3DO multiplayer chess game. As it is, *Battle Chess* is competent and entertaining but far from an inspired conversion. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

The Incredible Machine

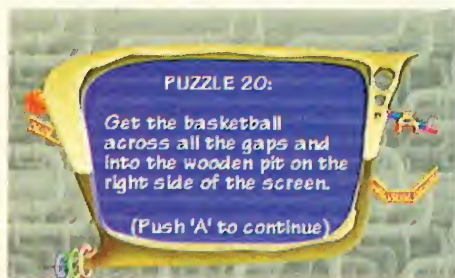
Publisher: Sierra © 01734 303322 Developer: Dynamix Save Game: Automatic Save Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Sierra's sage decision to release Dynamix's *Incredible Machine* means that the 3DO system can now boast one of, if not the, best puzzle games ever. Different to any other game released, it offers two modes of play – either the player has to solve individual 'puzzles' or build his or her own sprawling 'machine'. That might immediately put the technophobe off – but wait until you see the kind of thing Dynamix have in mind.

In the Puzzle Mode, at the start of each new game, you'll be told your somewhat bizarre-sounding goal. That might be: 'Make the Monkey move' or 'Make all of the dynamite go off'. Confused? Well, you see, each new screen will be composed of various odd parts, connected in some way or other. You might have a 'Pokey The Cat', a 'Mort The Mouse', a 'Dynamite Plunger', a 'See-Saw' and a 'Pinball Bumper' (there are 70 different 'machine parts' in all) and be told to make Mort The Mouse get in his hole.

Success relies on the player knowing the specific relationship between each of these elements (that Pokey The Cat makes Mort The Mouse run; that light shining onto a Magnifier will light a Fuse, etc.) and have a mind dextrous enough to be able to work out how to use those elements and relationships to make a machine capable of achieving the goal that's been given. Dynamix have included 208 mind-teasers for

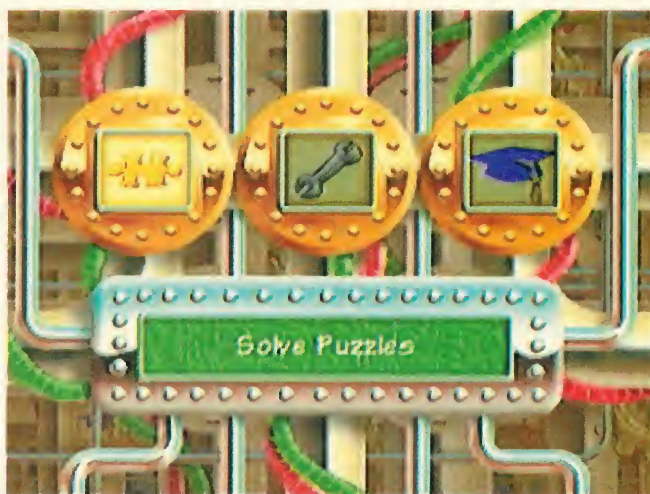
At the start of the game you'll be offered three modes of play: Solve Puzzles, Build A Machine or Tutorial Mode. Puzzles in Tutorial Mode and Puzzle Mode combined add up to 238!



Dynamix's *The Incredible Machine* hit the PC a year ago and ruptured many a mind. A deeply peculiar, unhealthy addictive, brain-bending puzzle game, it boasts a wonderfully original Heath Robinson approach to solving problems. If you've ever thought a robotised factory would be much more fun with lots of trampolines and cannons this is for you!

you to 'enjoy'. Naturally the first is ridiculously easy, the last nigh on impossible.

Given that the game requires a fair degree of (learned) knowledge, Dynamix have also included 30 Training Missions, allowing the player to get used to the various machine parts. Persevere with these and you'll soon have acquired all of the knowledge that you'll need to complete puzzle 208. However, knowledge and the ability required to put everything together are two quite different things. If you're anything like me you'll have to stare at a particular puzzle for ages before you'll be able to solve it. The weird thing is once you can solve it you'll wonder what all of the fuss was about.



The Incredible Machine's Machine Mode effectively gives the game an everlasting lifespan, allowing the player to create tortuously complicated machines of his or her own, using the various relationships between the 70 mechanical parts to near-interminable effect.

Imagine you've just discovered the ability to line up hundreds of dominoes and push one to set off a chain reaction. That's the kind of effect that you get here – but stupendously more varied. By pushing one thing you can get little men to fall off platforms and onto see-saws that will push a basketball into the air and onto a dynamite plunger – and so on. Most of the fun here is derived from watching these reactions, the fruits of your pained labour.

Obviously *The Incredible Machine* won't appeal to everyone – the arcade-fanatic will merely scratch his head before rummaging around his/her game collection for a more immediate and frenetic blaster. Yet there will be many for whom *The Incredible Machine* will become a dangerous obsession, who will not be able to sleep until they've solved that one, annoying puzzle they've been working on all day (and if they're truly addicted, all night). I fell into the latter category and now could not do without this wondrous game. There is, simply, a ghost in my machine without it. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Family Feud

Publisher: Gametek © 01753 553445 Developer: In House Save Game: 4 SRAM Slots Price: £39.99 Available: Now

Twisted showed how it should be done. A hugely innovative program, it dispensed with the mundane way game show games had been handled in the past, concentrating instead on current technology to create an almost surreal landscape of FMV, Silicon Graphics and chromakeyed actors. Not just a pretty face, Electronic Arts also journeyed deep into the very brains of the genre, re-working the typical questions associated with quiz shows into an atypical multimedia extravaganza. Dispensing with text-based questions, *Twisted* used the 3DO's graphic capabilities to create a mass of sub-games that could be played by anyone, anywhere – games which transcended cultural and age boundaries. There was a 'sliding tile' variant, for example, only all of the tiles were part of a FMV movie...

Gametek, ignoring the innovations made by Electronic Arts, have adopted a depressingly literal approach to the genre. *Family Feud*'s questions are not based upon something that the contestant can get wrong – history, politics, etc. – but on the subjective responses of the general public on various issues. Thus you might get asked: "What do you do on Sundays that you don't do on any other day?" and you have to guess the most typical response – like go to church, read the paper, go for a walk, etc.

Any game that so strongly relies on the responses of the general public is obviously going to be culturally specific. The Americans and the British might well share a common language but, judging by this

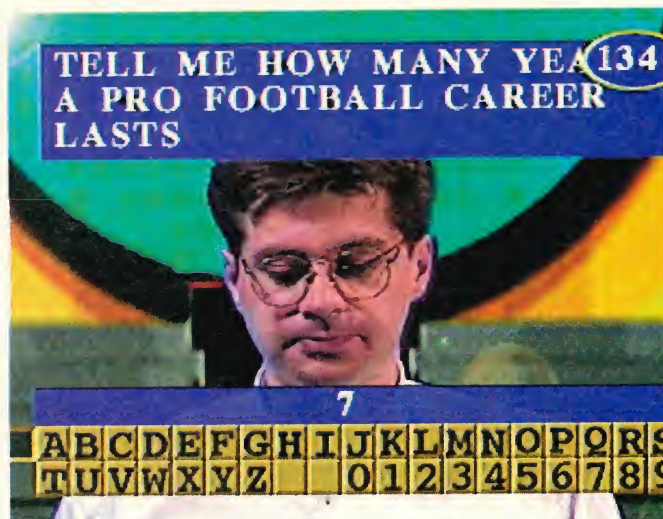


On the PC, Gametek are on a roll. Not only have they managed to get Dennis Hopper to star in their latest game, *Hell*, they've also released an inspired *Doom* variant, *Quarantine*, and a nifty space game, *Star Crusader*. With such success stories, hopes were high for their first 3DO system release, a license of the US show, *Family Feud*.

game at least, while they say *potarto*, we chirp *potayto*. Not only do the American public give weird responses to most questions, they also seem to have a large vocabulary that's simply missing from ours. Knowledge is assumed about US TV: "What's the best night in for TV?" and American sports: "How long does a Football Pro last in the major leagues?" The most common culturally specific reference of them all, however, is made to US states: "What state is known for its abundant prairie land?", for example. Winning, even in 'extremely thick' mode, is nigh on impossible.

Yet even had Gametek gone to the extra effort of taking straw polls from a British audience this game would still be a pretty dull affair. There's none of the imagination of the truly twisted *Twisted*, and none of its flair. Whilst the presenter of EA's game subverted and parodied every host before him, Gametek merely mimic the cheesey dialogue of the true-life show. Indeed, while the presenter of *Twisted* ran about, shouting and screaming, alternately cajoling and cheering on the groovy competitors, the presenter in

One of the worst things in *Family Feud* is that there will be words that you simply won't have heard of before – making the game almost impossible to win.



Family Feud only ever stands in the same place and consists of just 3 stills – one for reading the questions, one for telling the player whether he's got an answer right or wrong and one for clapping. Sad and pathetic, instead of laughing with the game you end up laughing at it – naturally not a good state of affairs.

There also seems to have been very little effort put into the game's scenery. While *Twisted* offered a dazzling variety of multi-coloured sets and props, in *Family Feud* you're offered the same three in an endless, repetitive cycle. The result? The game looks as cheap, plastic and 70's (in a brown flares kind of way) as the real thing.

Last but by no means least, the game lacks the immediacy of a true gameshow with the means to answer any question restricted to inputting a response. While *Twisted* allowed you to instantaneously respond to a question by clicking upon an icon, for example, here you have to spend an age moving a cursor move back and forward, clicking on the letters that make up the word that you want. In the slick, crafted multimedia age, *Family Feud* has no place – and can be of interest only to the masochistic sociologist attempting to understand the seemingly disturbed American psyche. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★

Theme Park

Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Bullfrog **Save Game:** 5 SRAM Slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Theme Park puts you in the position of a wealthy business man (or woman) who has decided to open a theme park.

Starting from scratch, you have to choose, place and arrange rides and shops in your park while keeping your customers happy. Are your ticket prices too high? Have you got enough rides? These questions are part of the everyday life of a *Theme Park* operator.

Despite the game's sophistication, it's perfectly set up to draw you in. An automated tutorial runs you through the basics of designing a park, but really anyone can get building when all it takes is a click of a button to place a Bouncy Castle or Tree House. Paths must be laid so visitors can get to the rides, but it's all beautifully simple.

Opening the park brings on the swarm of people waiting to get in. As they walk around, their thoughts are shown as speech bubbles, simplistic icons giving you an idea of how you park is doing (eg beefburger pictures mean people are hungry). However, there's a lot more to running a theme park than just building fast food parlours: the price of rides must be set to both draw customers and make money, the ticket stations placed to ensure maximum custom, you can even vary how much sugar goes into the ice cream. Another example of the game's subtlety – in design, if not taste – is the placing of restaurants. Place food vendors too close to a partic-

One of the unlikeliest and most original of PC hits of 1994 was this uniquely English concoction, marrying theme park whimsy to a sophisticated business sim.

ularly dramatic ride and watch the vomit fly. This can lead to a knock-on effect with people becoming sick by watching other people.

Which also illustrates why your staff are just as important as your rides.

These little people are there to fix your rides, clean up after

your customers or to just keep them amused while they wait in a queue. All this costs money, however, and your staff are constantly on the lookout for a pay increase. This has to be settled at the conference table, or your park will suffer from a strike!

All of the PC's sophistication appears to have been retained on the 3DO system, but now it looks prettier with slightly improved graphics and a more user-friendly pop-up menu system. Another nice touch are some brilliant FMV sequences. You can select almost any of the rides in your park and go on a first-person perspective tour. These really do add to the game's appeal and provide a strong hook for earning enough money for better rides. What's the fun of running a theme park if you can't use the rides yourself? The FMV is also accompanied by

some great audio, although the game proper is surprising quiet with just the odd sound effect and sporadic 'ice cream' music – I suppose if every ride's effects ran simultaneously it could get a bit wearing! It's also disappointing Bullfrog didn't choose their text style



All is well in the park, above, with plenty of action to be had. Except the tea cup ride is breaking down, and closing it for repairs will cost money. I'll repair it next year. It'll be okay 'till then...

better – financial data is tricky to decipher on small TVs – while the game's incredible complexity means the larger parks are subject to occasional crashes. Saving your game often is good advice!

Overall, *Theme Park* is a game suitable for players of all ages. The lower difficulty levels can get boring after a while, but are ideal training for the full game. Constantly improving your park and keeping its customers happy is an addictive formula but it will wear off in time unless you get more involved with the business side of the game. Brain dead arcade fans should be warned the business really can be quite complex, but most people will find building their own *Theme Park* as compulsive as visiting anyone else's! □ dgmb

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



Station Invasion

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA **Developer:** Studio 3DO **Save Game:** No **Price:** 39.99 **Available:** Now

Q uiz shows seem popular fare for 3DO systems in America, but *Station Invasion*, though aimed at the pre-teen audience, is the first package to feature the professional polish and simple playability of the genre's classic, EA's *Twisted* – unsurprising since Studio 3DO developed that title as well. Using similar live action footage pasted onto computer generated backdrops and utterly simplistic yet fairly compelling quizzes, *Station Invasion* accurately re-creates the ultra-bright, candy coated environment that permeates every crap American gameshow and soap you've ever seen.

The setting of a TV studio is a good premise to build upon and the story makes good use of the material – an average TV production house has been invaded by kids, who are not only starring in, but actually running the shows. There are five programmes battling it out in the network ratings ("it's all about gutz, brainz and ratings, kid"), all vehicles for abominable young brats, such as Ernie Go-Lucky, host of What's That Smell, and Angelica D'Jour, glam and fab, teen star of Sundae's Of Our Lives. You pick which show you want to produce, and can compete for ratings against up to four other people. Your child prodigy gives each of you a mundane task or puzzle to solve, and the winner gets points which equal ratings figures. As another reward (?) the winning producer gets to screen the next, sixty second segment of their program, before moving on to round two. The whole audio and visual assault is linked by a pre-pubescent female news reporter and her dog, who pass irritating comments from the comfort of their sofa studio.

The min-programmes are well produced (for a videogame), and although the wit and cynicism of *Twisted* isn't visible, there's still an element of parody that adds humour to the predictably stupid, over-the-

This edutainment game gives you and your youngest the chance to work for a "Powerhouse (TV station) producing some top draw entertainment..." Heady heights indeed, unless your children are as precocious as the kidz in this game.

top clips. What's That Smell is pretty banal, but Sundae's Of Our Lives is a genuinely amusing spin on Alice and Blossom, with Angelica victimising her podgy friend and flirting with a milkshake boy to amusing effect. The graphic design of these star vehicles is consistently impressive, which is fair compromise considering their shortness, and as an incentive to beat your chums and grab that air time, they work very well.

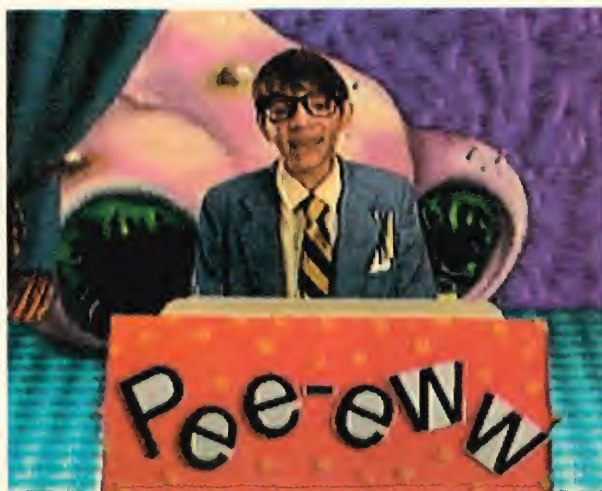
The puzzle games that make up the bulk of this package are well presented (though simply styled, they're well themed) and blissfully free of too many specifically American questions (that so plagued *Family Feud*). Instead, there's simple maths questions, spelling teasers, sliding puzzle games (complete a picture of a classical composer whilst his most famous tune plays in the background, and you're rewarded by a brief biography), identify the object and pick the musical instrument that's playing. This is one of the more innovative sub-games, using the console's capacity for audio and visual questions rather more effectively than the others, and it's a shame more games exploiting the 3DO's capabilities couldn't have been implemented. Perhaps the most enjoyable game though, is the Script Rewrite section, where you must pick from a small selection of random verbs, nouns and adjectives, words that will be then inserted into an unread script (a telling indication of how these shows are written?). The re-reading of the mystery script is hilarious, as well as having the obvious benefits of explaining the difference between action, name and descriptive words. Great fun. There's not many of these games, so they soon start repeating themselves, but they're all enjoyable enough and obviously, the point is that they skilfully dis-



guise the mathematical, geographical and historical questions with cute graphics and over excited sound FX. The three difficulty levels are also well judged, with easy being fairly moronic (sorry – good for youngsters) whilst hard had me stumped.

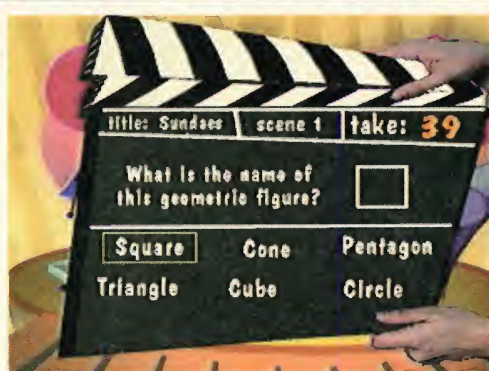
Whilst it's easy to dismiss all this day-glo activity as crass and simplistic initially, there's actually a fair level of sophistication to the game. The way the various segments of show, quiz, report, ratings update etc. are all invisibly linked, lacking any pregnant pauses common to less well designed video game shows, is a testament to some well-worked design, with youngsters never given a chance to get bored. As a piece of edutainment software, this is highly commendable, and whilst British kids may blanch at the sickly, gooey atmosphere ever present, those with a more developed cynicism should enjoy laughing at the vile gameshow stars and their enormous, transparent egos. This treads a narrow path between education and good fun very successfully, and offers a clear outline for future edutainment packages to follow. A more British variant, with a bit more doom, gloom, rain and cynicism would go down a treat though, preferably programmed in Manchester. For now, however, Studio 3DO seem to have cornered the market in gameshows, with two fabulous releases. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★





The presentation of even the simplest games such as identify the geometric shape (right), go some way to making *Station Invasion* a consistently enjoyable package. Below, more high quality scenes from the soaps and quizzes.



Right, the great Spot That Instrument quiz which identifies the non-musical duffer easily.



3D Atlas

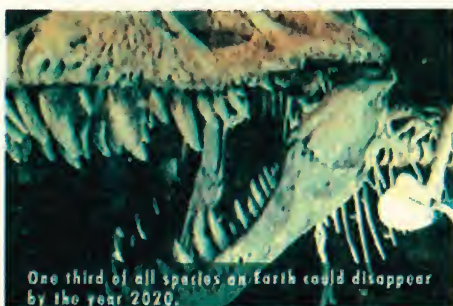
Publisher: Electronic Arts © 01753 549442 **Developer:** Multimedia Corporation **Save Game:** No **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

A curious release on first sight, this is multimedia at its very best – taking a potentially devastatingly boring subject (geography) and using the power of the 3DO system to inject a mega-tonne of excitement and, most importantly, interaction. The cover line, “The world isn’t flat. Why should your atlas be?”, is a clear indication of the program’s most obvious attraction – no pages to flip and no magnifying lens required, just zoom into and rotate the planet freely – but it’s also rather disingenuous because there’s a lot more than place names in here.

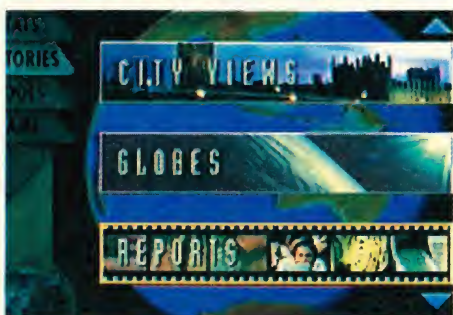
After selecting just what you want to be visible on your globe, the most obvious decision is to zoom in. This is possible with nine different types of zoom, culminating in satellite images of cities and terrain that are quite overwhelming. Another immediately stunning option is to watch 3D fly-by’s of the Alps, Himalayas, Rockies and Sheep Mountains, which are fast and impressive. Also available, although more of interest to geologists than casual explorers, are topographic illustrations of any given location, which can be rotated and zoomed into, or viewed on time-lapse to show predictions of environmental change.

Click on any country, and an information-filled postcard will appear that can be rotated to read a brief social and geographical report on the selected place, but the real tour de force of *3D Atlas* lie in the video documentaries that can be pulled up on each city, each detailing significant aspects of politics,

Below, another deeply depressing fact.



One third of all species on Earth could disappear by the year 2020.



Billed as a Multimedia expedition to understanding planet earth, this is EA's brave stab at providing some edutainment for the more responsible 3DO owner with family ties...

environmental dangers, population, animal life and more. These are of a very high standard, both technically and editorially, with concise, simply worded appraisals and literally thousands of interesting facts.

Although this wealth of information could be overwhelming, EA have cleverly inserted a quiz game which allows up to four people to implement their new found knowledge of the globe. *Around The World* picks a starting point then asks you questions ranging from population to geography and environment, correct answers winning you air miles, the ultimate objective being to circumnavigate yourself back to your original location. These multiple choice questions are never dull, and basic flag identification and country of origin tests are wisely spread between more unusual queries – such as how many nuclear bombs have been exploded since WWII. The quiz is very entertaining, with occasional bursts of FMV to spice things up, but the second challenge is selecting from a choice of three locations, the destination you want to travel to with your air miles. The shortest, straightest route is the key to winning, but you might be surprised at how slim your geographic knowledge is when you end up flying all over the place, endlessly picking the least useful next location. This is great fun, especially with a few people jostling around the 3DO, shouting complete guesses, and as an aid to learning, it’s probably the most immediately useful section of this package.

Whilst gamers blissfully free of hatchlings will blithely avoid this package, unfortunates in possession of children have an obligation to purchase *3D Atlas*, since it’s a quite excellent learning tool that few early and pre-teens will be able to resist. The chief inadequacy of standard schooling – lack of interaction, with transference of facts made dull through the tedious process of communication and inability to impart a sense of reality and relevance – have been dissolved here, the program skilfully implementing all the features associated with the very best multimedia learning aids. Whilst you could



The picture quality in the excellently compiled documentaries is of a very high standard, with clean cuts and fast accessing times.

lead a child through *3D Atlas* with structured, logical progression, the tremendous user interface allows for intuitive, exciting lateral steps, one area of investigation easily flowing to another, cross referencing made incredibly easy since at any time you can pull out, spin the globe, and go somewhere else entirely,

the important ingredient of choice being a powerful aid to retention of information. Perhaps the most profound effect of exploring earth via *3D Atlas* is that although you see snapshots of cultures and environmental situations you’d never seen before, the overall impression is of a place smaller and more integrated than you’d ever imagined. This sense of unity is an important achievement – with the chief emphasis of *3D Atlas* wisely focusing upon environmental damage. A lot of facts and figures about the ozone layer and wildlife destruction combine to provide a relevance that cannot be achieved by mere shouting. *3D Atlas* quietly reminds you of both the world’s smallness and painful fragility, and this is perhaps even more commendable than its excellent geographic tutoring. An excellent juncture for specialist 3DO software to develop from, this is a powerful and commendable multimedia package that deserves serious attention, and provides a standard that all future multimedia products should aspire to. □ mcw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

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Trip'd

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853416 Developer: Warp Save Game: N/A Price: £39.99 Available: Now

While the manual pokes fun at stereotypical, Western attitudes to Japan with the programmers claiming geisha, samurai and so forth as parents, Warp's own attitude to the West is itself rather off-beam. The English title serves as an amusing enough tribute to 3DO's founder, but the new, 'Westernised' graphics are a disaster. On one screen, time is marked by the grotesque pulsing of an humanoid's head. On another screen, losing brings up a skull which promptly ejects its eyeballs on bloody stalks. Hence the absurdity of a 12-rating in the US for a *Tetris*-variant. The best you can say about the new graphics is that they're mostly marginal to gameplay and you soon learn to ignore them.

Also best ignored is the scenario which attempts the always foolhardy task of grafting some kind of plot on to a *Tetris* clone. 'Funky creatures have travelled back in time from another galaxy. They may seem cute, but look out – the Deow'Nz are dangerous!' They're also the principal innovation in this riff on the classic Russian game.

Whenever you clump together four like-coloured tiles in a square, they don't disappear but transform into Deow'Nz. These monster tiles vary in type according to the colour of the tiles and can only be destroyed when you cause an identically-coloured line to disappear. As the Deow'Nz disappear, an

The Professor, below, is the toughest opponent, but even he can be beaten without much practice.



After creating 3DO's most chilling adventure with *D*, Tokyo's Warp studios have now produced the system's first *Tetris* clone. Unsurprisingly, it's one of the most imaginative and playable variants ever, despite some unpleasant graphics...

action is triggered. The common green tiles, for example, create a Citr'n which, when destroyed, causes a layer of mismatched tiles to fall down on you – not good. Gray tiles, by contrast, create a Hawk'n which in single-player mode wipe out an additional 12 tiles when destroyed. Better yet, in two-player mode the Hawk'n causes an annoying Citr'n to appear on your opponent's screen!

Two-player *Tetris* was, if anything, even more addictive than one-player with your destroyed lines appearing on your opponent's screen. *Trip'D* doesn't have that relentless simplicity. The Special Tile system is more rarely activated, however the tactical possibilities are obviously far richer. And, more importantly, the squeals caused when Mart'n suddenly makes two layers of tiles fall on your opponent is tremendous. Game designers the world over will be dismayed to learn that while we've been gobsmacked by *FIFA*'s TV-like graphics, enraptured by the gore of *Samurai Shodown*, there's never been a game which has got us quite so addicted as two-player *Trip'D*. The one-more-go syndrome is immense. This time, you'll get your revenge and show that smug so-and-so who's boss.

If two-player mode is arguably one of the best in a *Tetris* variant, conventional one-player mode ranks among the worst. While *Tetris*' speed builds constantly, whenever *Trip'D* gets fast you invariably finish a level – resetting the speed and losing a layer of tiles in the process. I played to level 22 before giving up in boredom, only to discover there's no high score method nor, for that matter, a skill setting or quit option other than the off switch.

Fortunately, there is an option to play the two-player mode against the computer, with eight 'opponents' ranging from the Activist (dumbest) to the Professor (smartest). The latter provides a particularly impressive lesson in the use of Deow'Nz, never using one when a deftly timed two or even three can put



Although in-game music is banal, an entertaining Trip'Dance option allows you to create your own music with each button triggering a sound effect co-ordinated with rave-type images. Truly compelling...

you in real trouble! He provides a reasonable, if not awesome level of challenge. Unfortunately, although all the characters have pictures in the stylish selection window, they don't actually appear either in-game or at the end. This decreases the satisfaction of winning, especially if after a long match you're unsure if you really did select the hardest character. There's no way of telling, especially as victory doesn't move you on to the next character nor even a high score – merely offering you a rematch against your current opponent.

Overall, *Trip'd* is an odd mix of the excellent and the sloppy. The basic innovation of the Deow'Nz is great and gives the basic *Tetris* engine a far more competitive, tactical edge. Unfortunately, the structure for solo play is sloppy and the colourful graphics marred by unnecessarily gruesome images. The lack of varied backdrops is lazy, while in-game sonics consist of good sound effects and a banal synthpop tune. At a budget price these shortcomings would be bearable, especially with that excellent two-player mode. At full price, however, its appeal is more questionable. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★

Icebreaker

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 **Developer:** Magnet Interactive Studios **Save Game:** 1 SRAM slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Today, of course, you can make a game look like a Hollywood blockbuster and sell trillions— for a price – so don't take any risks over original gameplay. Sequels, conversions and licenses dominate. Most are great fun to play, but a certain edge seems lost...

All of which isn't to say *Icebreaker* is a mid-Eighties throwback which looks awful, but plays great. *Icebreaker* actually looks pretty smart. But rather than spend months working up some 3D, texture-mapped blast-'em-up which takes a great screenshot, Magnet have done something very different. They've chosen to concentrate on taking a novel, simple game idea and stretching it about as far as you could imagine, in terms of visuals, audio and, most of all, gameplay.

The plot is simple: 'Pyramids are bad. They are evil and nasty.' To clear a level you must destroy every single one of them. Your craft, suspiciously like a pyramid on its side, has no power-ups or shields or homing missiles. It has a laser and that's it. Pyramids, by contrast, are a much more varied and interesting bunch. There are six types including Purples (which leave a pit behind when shot), Zombies (slow-moving marsh lovers) and Rainbows (which don't decide which pyramid they are until hit). All of these are, reassuringly, quite immobile. Seekers, unfortunately, aren't.

Seekers range from 'dumb as donuts' yellow – which happily march into pits and are easily

Gamers today? Pah, bunch of namby-pamby wimps. I remember the days when games were a real challenge. One mistake and you were dead. None of this five or ten levels business either, but 150 levels ranging from the tough to the fiendishly insane. Those were the days...

jammed behind obstacles – to Limeys which avoid both. Then there's Chameleons which act like harmless Greens until you get close, then leap out at you. There are eight Seeker types, the toughest being the Meanies – which are slow but smart, and split in two when shot!

Seekers are useful for marching through otherwise indestructible Green pyramids but, principally, they're a menace. And just as in *Burgertime*, killing the nasties only sends them back to their start positions. Seekers are what makes a rather esoteric, laborious puzzle game into a shoot-'em-up which can rival *Defender* for intensity.

Unlike *Defender*, this was developed for a 3DO and the graphics let you know it with some amazing attention to detail. Seekers do not slide toward you, they tip-toe. The animation imbues them with real character and humour. All of the various pyramids have their own death sequences, beautifully detailed, and the sound effects are even better. The screams of slowly falling Seekers lured into a pit is just one of the most obvious gags which make *Icebreakers* a surprisingly funny experience.

There are also no less than 18 background tracks, ranging from the Soul2Soul-like 'Seventies' to

SGI animations (above right) not only make for a nifty opening, but run through the game serving as introductions for new hazards. Ice levels, top left, causes plenty of errors, the rear of your craft spinning out and sliding you into lethal reds. Frustrating! Left, panic stricken drama caught between slime and a hard place, with plenty of enemies queuing to send your angelic spirit skyward.



On Insane level, the action is nightmarish, with splitting Meanies and dumb but persistent Yellows overpowering through sheer numbers. The slime at the perimeter offers instant death. The simple graphics are beautifully animated.

the oddball 'Quack'. Most aren't that long and share a similar, jazzy synth feel but they fit in well with the designer look and further the cool, slick atmosphere. The relaxing tunes come in handy when you've just died again.

While most modern games ease you into the action with powerful shields, *Icebreaker* doesn't. If you lightly brush against a Red, gently touch the side of a pit or let any Seeker touch you, the result is the same: game over. You can play any of the 150 levels in whatever order you like, but each and every level only gives you a single life to complete it. This can take some getting used to. Some people will hate that, while the subtle graphics and less than smooth scroll will give them more ammunition for hating it. Others, however, will love the incredible attention to detail, the breathtaking variety and sheer challenge. In short, only real gamers need apply... □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



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VR Stalker

Publisher: BMG © 0171 9730011 **Developer:** Morpheus Interactive **Save Game:** Passcodes **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

Programmed by a brand-new start-up, VR *Stalker* is an intriguing hotch-potch of ideas and graphic trickery. The opening sequence is a bravura display of intro cinematics with lots of professional looking pans and fast cuts as various aircraft scramble. The *Terminator* 2-style voice-over is an unintentional parody while the storyline is purest hokum, but the visuals still get the pulse going. You can certainly see why Silent Software asked them to produce the intro for *Return Fire*.

The graphic engine is an effective mix of sprites (for enemy aircraft) and polygons (for ground objects such as bunkers, skyscrapers and hills). The technique allows for plenty of speed – slowdown only rears its ugly head when the programmers lurch entertainingly over-the-top with ridiculous amounts of aircraft swirling about on the toughest missions. In fact sometimes it's too fast with the lack of ground detail making judging your height tricky – and you can lose height very easily.

For the UK version, Morpheus betray their enthusiastic origins by taking time to rework the game. While it still runs in letterbox on PAL, all of the aircraft cockpits have been redrawn – they're still no works of art, but they're much improved, as are exterior views of the aircraft which now boast shading to make them more realistic.

Unsurprisingly, VR *Stalker's* resemblance to any kind of serious sim is entirely coincidental. Look up the family tree for this game and you'll find Sega's *Afterburner* rather than Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*. Missions begin with you in the combat zone and end as soon as the last target is destroyed. You have complete freedom within the combat zone and the game is compatible with the Flightstick Pro. Nevertheless, your controls are simplistic to say the least: increase/decrease speed and fire weapons – either cannon or missiles.

Below, a gunship copter is nicely lined up for blasting. As in *Super Wing Commander*, sprites provide a reasonable 3D illusion flipping between front, side and rear-view graphics.



Originally released in 1994 by ALG, it's taken BMG for the game to make its official – and enhanced – transatlantic crossing to PAL. It certainly boasts some neat presentation, but does gameplay match up?

There's no chaff or flares to distract enemy missile, instead you must execute finely timed acrobatics to keep plane and pilot in from being comprehensively trashed.

Some minimal tactics come in with your choice of aircraft; initially on offer are a Grumman F-14 Tomcat (good all-rounder), A-10 Thunderbolt (best for ground attack) and General Dynamics F-16 (best for air combat). The aircraft all have their own handling characteristics, the Thunderbolt being particularly cumbersome, but the main difference is more simplistic. Fighters such as the F-16 have rapidly reloading air-to-air missiles with air-to-ground missiles being much slower. For bombers like the A-10, the situation is reversed.

As you progress through the levels, more aircraft become available. The Northrop F-117 Stealth Fighter and F119 Stealth Bomber offer harder to detect versions of the above, while the X-2 experimental has 'turbo thrust' and 'guided plasma blasts'. Besides adding a bit of variety, they also give extra lives – when all your planes are lost it's game over.

Besides the extra aircraft, the game also improves with more dramatic locations. Level one's mostly flat, boring desert landscape gives way to a reasonably effective city and far more tricky, hilly terrain. Enemy tactics are rarely that advanced, gunship helicopters in particular seem little more than floating targets. The way enemy flak zips past is nicely done though and explosions are effective, if hardly spectacular.

While obviously a non-starter as a serious flight sim, VR *Stalker's* stylish presentation, nippy 3D engine and some nice graphics make it a commendable debut for such a new team. That said, it doesn't bear serious comparison with the very well financed efforts of EA (the *Shock Wave* series) and Panasonic (*Scramble Cobra*) which are superior in



Above, an F-14 hammers an aircraft carrier with a salvo of missiles. In the distance a pair of islands play host to more enemies.



Above, weaving through city skyscrapers at night is good fun. It's a pity dodging enemy missiles is so awkward.

just about every department. VR *Stalker* is a reasonably fun 'inbetween' title which would be a lot more comfortable at a budget price than £40. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★

Flying Nightmares

Publisher: Studio 3DO © TBA **Developer:** Domark **Save Game:** 8 SRAM Slots **Price:** £44.99 **Available:** Now

For console fans too long deprived of home computer delights, the first take-off and long, sweeping climb away from the carrier is a revelation. This game literally soars with an utterly convincing sensation of flight. There have, inevitably, been some compromises in cramming the original PC game – Domark's *AV-8B* – into 3MB of RAM. The option to plan your own campaign has been stripped out, as has the option to transfer between allied aircraft. The controls are somewhat simplified... but if you think these cuts turn a full-blown flight sim into *Afterburner*, think again.

The highly realistic cockpit is a world away from *Shock Wave*'s simplicities. The Head-Up-Display and various Multi-Function Displays are crammed with cryptic information. As you switch between weapons, the HUD flicks up new targeting systems. While Hydras are relatively straightforward point-and-shoot missiles, gravity bombs are much trickier. There are, of course, Mavericks and laser-guided bombs, but unlike those in 16bit flight sims these are far from miracle weapons. Without friendly forces support, you have to 'paint' the target with your own onboard laser – fixing the aiming cursor from a rapidly manoeuvring jumpjet with AA exploding all around is far from easy. Even if friendly forces do provide support, Domark kindly ensure the weapons' (in)accuracy is realistically modelled.

Real flight sim buffs will also enjoy the ability to VIFF – Vectoring In Forward Flight – which uses the Harrier's famous ability to hover for some radical acrobatic moves. This makes carrier landings a bit easier, but most will be relieved that the computer will bring you in automatically unless you decide otherwise. There's certainly a substantial array of controls to learn, everything from wheel brakes on/off to eject is available with the right key combination.

On joypad the shift moves aren't too difficult and the feel of the aircraft comes through well, although the aircraft's realistic handling means it's far from a picnic. The Flightstick Pro's analogue controls bring over the sensation of flight even more impressively.

To make up for the lack of a PC's keyboard controls, the 3DO version impresses with some flash audio-visuals. The lengthy intro sequence is both very dramatic and an accurate depiction of most of the weapons in action. It's also accompanied by a driving rock guitar soundtrack by Mike Ash and Mike

Flying Nightmares has come on a long way since its first preview in 3DO/1. Photorealistic menu screens now include FMV, a digitised cockpit flickers with warning lights, while the Spartan 3D of the Mac is glossed with slick texture maps. The first, and only, superconsole flight sim is here and at last you really can fly on your 3DO!

Edwards of Jesus Jones. There are also an additional eight tracks, evenly divided between rock and ambient – most of which are pretty good. All nine can be swapped between ingame, mixed up or down at your discretion with the excellent sound effects.

The graphics are similarly impressive with the Harrier itself being something of a masterpiece in the art of texture mapping. While lacking the resolution to show every last rivet, the graphics evocatively suggest all kinds of fine detail and are extremely effective – especially with full light-sourcing. As with any modern flight sim, panning about in an exterior viewpoint is great fun.

Unfortunately, you do need a

Flightstick Pro to pan but the missile view is available on joypad and lets you appreciate some fine detail on enemy copters, jets and such like. The aircraft carrier is also impressive, while the 3DO's palette is nicely illustrated by the smooth blending of the sky.

Other graphics aren't quite as impressive with limited texture maps.

The coastal transition zones are slick and the mountains impressively rocky, but otherwise the landscapes are a bit plain. This hardly makes for impressive screenshots, but ingame you're actually glad of it. Unlike in an arcade blaster like *Shock Wave*, enemy targets rarely get that big. When you're travelling at 700 knots, the approach of a supersonic F-16 isn't going to fill your screen unless you're on a collision course. Mostly, jets are fast-moving dots while ground targets such as hangers, tanks and anti-air-



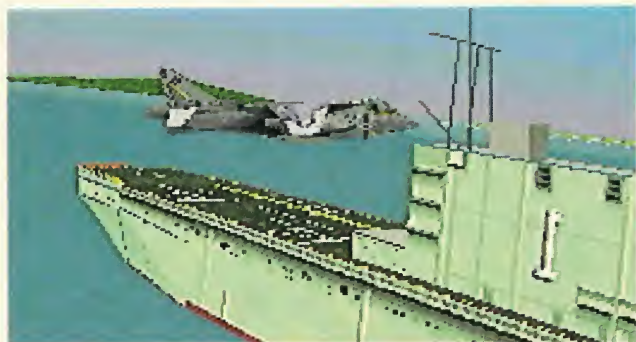
Although you can see other Harriers take off from the Tarawra, you can't really fly with them on missions. There are no big co-ordinated attacks to take part in either.

craft installations rarely grow beyond small boxes. Elaborate texture maps would swamp the targets and you're glad of all the clarity you can get. There are some nice, realistically scaled explosions, but they and spitting tracing fire aim for realism rather than ILM-style special effects.

The sense of actually being there is particularly strong in Combat mode. While some sims scatter their missions across the globe for superficial glamour, *Nightmares* focuses down to a single campaign. Taken over by a military junta, the tiny island of Barcala has made world headlines and the UN has despatched Operation Saber to restore democracy – in just three days! The small time-frame emphasises the intensity of modern combat, your gruelling roster of missions includes everything from combat air patrols to bombing ammo dumps to cratering runways. Barcalan air defences aren't awesome, but then neither is your task force. The number of Harriers and lives at your disposal are limited, while the Harrier's thin-skinned fuselage provides scant protection against even small arms fire.

Overall, realism is undoubtedly the game's strongest card. Piloting the complex beast which is a





Above, your AV-8B Harrier II swoops low over your US Marine carrier – the Tarawra. Enemy aircraft include helicopters (UH-1 Hueys), jet fighters (F-16s, F-4s and F-5 Tiger IIs) and transports (the C-130 Hercules).



The slate grey finish of the Harrier is identical to that in *True Lies*, which also used planes from US Marine squadron VMA-513, AKA the Flying Nightmares.

Harrier through a complete mission brings a real sense of accomplishment. On the Flightstick particularly, you get an excellent sense of being in control of a huge chunk of metal in sometimes uncertain balance between speed, airflow and gravity. The frame rate is nice and smooth – lending particularly heart-stopping impact to low altitude stalls. This, in turn, makes low level bombing runs especially challenging. While in *Shock Wave* targets often seem to roll up as if on a conveyor belt, in *Nightmares* you must carefully plan a long swooping attack in full 3D.

While arcade-fiends might find the intricate controls frustrating, the ability to simply zoom off into the wide-blue yonder is a big temptation... and combat isn't too dull either. Screaming in at low level, with tracers arcing overhead and AA exploding all around, certainly gets the adrenaline pumping – especially with tricky weapons to aim, lots of very solid terra firma streaking by and a complete lack of *Wing III*-style shields! □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★



COMMAND & CONTROL

1: Mission background info.
2: Load/save game options.
3: Choose three preset weapon loads, or customise your own fit. There are 15 types of stores, including Sidewinders, rockets, ECM pods, chaff and flares.
4: Mission Briefing. The campaign stretches over three days with 36 missions in all. Most missions include secondary as well as primary objectives – towards the end, you'll often need to fly several sorties to finish a mission. Arcade mode allows you to play any of the 36 missions in whatever order you like.

Panzer General

Publisher: Mindscape © 01444 246333 Developer: SSI Save Game: 4 SRAM slots Price: £39.99 Available: Now

While *Panzer General* does not actually include Auschwitz or Dachau, in a sense it doesn't have to. Modern warfare is in of itself a war against humanity. As an excellent strategy simulation, *Panzer General* soon makes this very clear. As you survey your first battleground, the strategic objectives are clear: cities. Modern military forces are incredibly mobile and difficult to pin down – except when defending strategic objectives. Cities are inevitably located on strategic crossroads and offer abundant resources for resupply in both material and men. In the game, they also rank second only to military fortifications for their defensive strength.

When the Russians launched their 'policing action' on Chechnya, Yeltsin assumed rolling some tanks through the streets of its capital, Grozny, would settle the conflict in days. Big mistake. In the ensuing debacle, one elite brigade – the 131st Maikop Motorised – was entirely wiped out and their corpses left to the dogs. Obviously, what the Russians should've done is 'neutralise' the objective first. SSI advise the ideal campaign should first bring in fighters to weaken entrenchments, followed by tactical bombers to take out enemy artillery. Tanks should then destroy opposing tank units, allowing the city to be encircled and artillery safely brought in to chew up city defences. Heavy bombers, by contrast, do not reduce enemy strength but the constant bombardment 'suppresses' their ability to counter-attack your forces.

This is pretty much exactly what the Russians did do and is why parts of Grozny now looks like a moon-scape. On the anniversary of Hiroshima's obliteration, there's a tendency to trace such outrages back to May 31, 1915 when Zeppelin L38 bombed London and killed two young sisters. In fact, strategic bombing is only one piece of the totality of modern warfare. The concept of a just, almost civilised war had always been fragile and the lightening speed of tank warfare erased any notion of war being easily separat-



Import Bug

If you've bought an import version you should be aware the first batch suffered a save game bug. Basically, the game only allows itself to be saved in the first four save slots. But perversely when you do save, it erases slots at the bottom. The game warns you of the slot it's deleting, but the flaw basically means you can only retain at most three save slots if you wish to keep saving *Panzer General*. SSI are aware of the problem and Mindscape have offered to swap any bugged versions for a new version if you call: © 01444 246333.

On September 1st, 1939, Germany's war machine began a world masterclass on modern, industrialised warfare. Its strategy, tightly integrating ground and air forces, came breathtakingly close to achieving world domination. For strategy buffs, *Panzer General* offers the tantalising prospect of succeeding in capturing the world. And even novices will find its slick interface and intricate problems enthralling.

ed from the civilian population. This is best demonstrated in one of Germany's most dramatic military successes, fully recreated within *Panzer General*, wherein fast-moving, motorised forces ripped through France's 'impregnable' Maginot Line. The blitzkrieg, or lightning war, had arrived and with it total warfare.

Panzer General's excellence comes through in its realistic modelling of this type of combat. Grainy FMV clips between levels and in-game windowed animations make for varied screenshots, but are distractions to the game's real appeal and soon turned off. While no strategy game as comprehensive as this is instantly addictive, the manual provides a thoughtful walkthrough of the first, utterly compelling scenario. The graphics may be bland, but they portray plenty of mind-tinglingly complex problems to work through. Artillery moves much faster if stowed on trucks, but is then highly vulnerable to enemy attack so infantry and tanks must secure their route. You can also upgrade units or buy new ones with the prestige points you earn – over 350 unit types represent WWII's breathtaking advance in military technology, from Polish horse cavalry to Me262a jetfighters. Moreover, you command the entire theatre – aircraft, motorised units, infantry even, occasionally ships – quite massive forces must be integrated into a tightly focused strategy.

In all, there are some 35 scenarios running from



An Me262a jet buzzes the White House. Plan your campaigns well, and you could be in America in 1945 – the last obstacle to world domination for the Third Reich. The ability to alter history is a powerful illustration of the thought which has gone into this product.

1939 to 1945. You can either play them individually, or as a massive campaign wherein a major victory gives you extra forces to carry into the next, linked scenario. Although Axis forces provide the narrative backbone, you can choose to play the game from the Allied force or, if you've got a like-minded mate, have a two player game with each player taking control of one side. Moreover, this is the full, uncompromised PC original. Screen resolution is lower, due to it being played on a TV not a monitor, but there's four levels of zoom to compensate and, unlike *Theme Park*, all the text is easily legible. Despite the game's complexity, compression techniques allow all the game data to be saved with no compromise for 3DO's limited save space other than in the number of save positions allowed – just one for the biggest, Berlin scenario.

This is undoubtedly a classic of its kind and the fact 3DO's first such game is the best of its type is great. For non-fans, the depth of gameplay and the



Above, the German invasion of Poland pitted tanks against horse-mounted cavalry. Unsurprisingly, the question in this first scenario is not whether you'll win – but at what speed and cost.



Above, the Germans finally get to invade Great Britain in operation Sealion Plus. This upgrade of the plan cancelled after the Battle of Britain has you rampaging up and down the country. Above, Bournemouth under seige!



Above, England faces its darkest hour in this strategic map view.



According to Trip Hawkins, 3DO I was like this ambitious 1944 effort to end WWII early (left).



richness of its detail can be surprisingly involving. If you've got plenty of spare time, this huge challenge will happily eat it all up. This is especially true of the big scenarios with dozens and dozens of units to position, refuel and monitor. Some hi-tech macro controls, grouping units, and a much more imaginative look would certainly be welcome. Or perhaps not...

When the evening news routinely runs blood-splattered footage from Sarajevo, the contrast between *Panzer General's* technocratic jargon and blood-soaked human consequences are queasily apparent. To avoid a political minefield, the game makes no mention of who the *Panzer General* serves in Berlin. This is a dubious decision, as is the refusal to tackle the disparity between 'suppression' and shrapnel scything through a Bosnian marketplace.

Videogames have always gloried in mindless violence, but this obviously isn't mindless and its systematic brutality parallels the mindset of the cold-blooded, destructive economics of early-Eighties Thatcherism. It's a calculating, anti-humanism and the utter lack of morality, while realistic, can make pondering its problems rather unappealing. □ ssw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★★

Scramble Cobra

Publisher: Panasonic © 01344 853146 **Developer:** Genki **Save Game:** 3 SRAM slots **Price:** £39.99 **Available:** Now

After *Tetsujin* and *Wacky Races*, you tend to approach Japanese releases rather warily unless an arcade conversion is involved. *Scramble Cobra*'s FMV mission intros and a competent clone of the *Shock Wave* graphic engine don't, initially, raise expectations all that high. Yet the more you play, the more interesting the game becomes.

Rewind to the mission intros and you'll find a proper tactical briefing follows the FMV. While *Shock Wave*'s missions aped a conventional shoot-'em-up, where the principal task is developing tactics for each new enemy (including end-level bosses), *Scramble Cobra* is more like a proper sim. Search and destroy missions allow you to plan your own route through, stopping at a resupply point along the way. More common, however are defensive missions.

One has you escorting a military convoy through enemy territory. Again and again, you're torn between chasing down enemy vehicles and sticking close to the convoy. A further twist is a decoy convoy – which turns out to contain your vital supplies for re-arming and refuelling. What makes the game so compulsive is that when you die you always feel you should try different tactics, either for the mission or a new enemy type that's defeated you.

The graphics also grow on you as notice the fine detail. The sky is beautifully drawn, while the texturing of terrain and vehicles is excellent. Stuck in a defensive turn, I once had time to think how like an airbrushed painting the game looked. White

While joypad play is fine, with four different options to choose from, the Flightstick Pro unsurprisingly provides the best experience in this fun air combat game.



When Heuys started going down over Vietnam, the US Army demanded the world's first helicopter gunship. The same big powertrain as a Heuy, but dropped inside a shark-like body with gun turret and stubby, missile-draped wings. Thirty years on, the HeuyCobra is still an awesome piece of kit...



shark-nosed fighters and solid, gray homing missiles seemed quite stunning as they whipped past. Realistic camouflage furthers the overall sense of realism, while an excellent HUD display usefully and excitingly picks up each target with zooming, glowing icons.

While the game is hardly a proper sim, the various elements gel perfectly to create an entirely believable alternate world. Like *VR Stalker*, there are no chaff or flares to distract homing missiles. Unlike *VR Stalker*, you have confidence in being able to manoeuvre (even reverse), to evade or destroy them. There's some great detail in how fuel-exhausted missiles don't disappear or simply blow up, but dip and fall to ground. The plumes of fire which shoot out of destroyed vehicles, preferably in multiple missile

A pair of Crusaders streak by as you bank around in unrealistic, but highly entertaining copter vs jets dogfighting.

strikes, is highly satisfying while the fire streaked smoke which pours over you cockpit after a hit is disconcertingly realistic. Defending a military building in Cliff Keep is a perfect setpiece, with Crusader jets streaking in from all directions before loosing off missiles and then banking away. It's fun when you notice you can actually shoot air-to-ground missiles out of the sky, if your reactions are sharp enough, but then you realise you have to do that to survive...

There are ten missions in all and, on easy setting admittedly, it doesn't take that long to get through them. Aside from night and desert missions, there isn't much graphic variety either. Nevertheless, while it lasts this is a fun and intriguing game which makes your head work as much as your trigger finger. □ ssw

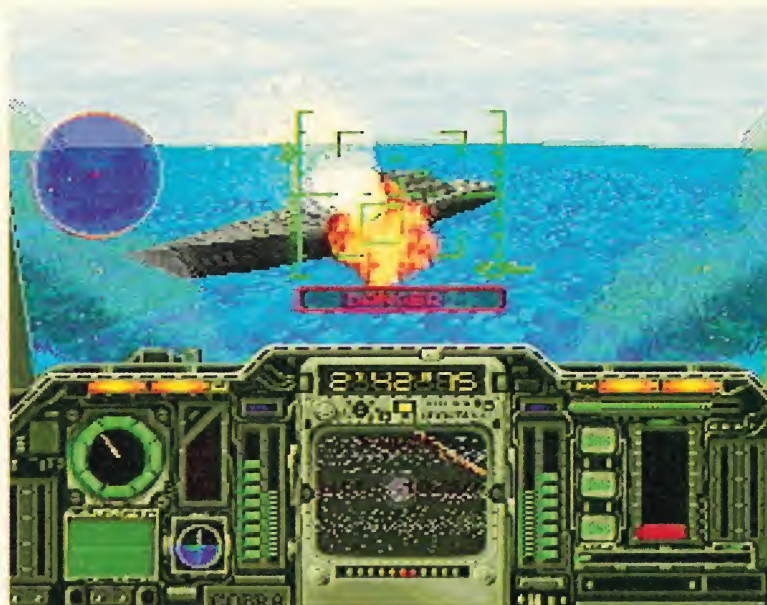
3DO Magazine rating: ★★★



Above, green HUD squares and plumes of fire mark enemy forces in this unsuccessful ambush of an allied convoy. Below, an enemy gunship. If you fail to take it out early it'll get on your tail and open up with rockets.



Right, a gunship goes down in flames while below a Vought Crusader attacks head-on! Later on, there are Northrop F-5 and Mirage fighters. Below, night-time action is a demanding test of your reflexes. Listen to the general, bottom, as his briefings contain vital tactical information.



Above, an enemy cruiser takes a direct hit but your copter is about to go down with smoke blowing over the cockpit. On the left, a real hot zone with enemy fighters all over the place as an aircraft carrier is partially obscured by the smoke from your homing missile.



System Codes

The All Time Greatest tips and cheats... ever.

ANOTHER WORLD

To access a hidden level on this stylish



platform puzzler, enter **BRGR** on the password screen, then press **A**.

BURNING SOLDIER

To access the Debug menu you'll need two controllers. At the main screen access Option mode. Once in press **L,R,C,X** and **Right** on controller 2 simultaneously. A new menu should then appear, entitled "Debug Information/BS". It has five main options.

1. **ENEMY MISSILE.** Enemies won't shoot at you.
2. **ALWAYS BOSS CLEAR.** Defeat the end-of-level boss without even having to shoot.
3. **DATA STREAM JUMP.** Allows you to jump levels by using **L** and **R**.
4. **AREA SELECT.** Allows you to start at any one of the game's four playing areas.
5. **FOUR PLAYER MODE.** Allows four people to play. Need four pads!

DEMOLITION MAN LEVEL CHEAT

Pause the game at any time and enter **L, A, Up, Down, R** and **Up**. The passcode should change to **#PWR** to show



the cheat is activated. Press and hold **B** to get the level select appearing in the passcode box. Keep holding **B** and use

Up/Down to cycle through the levels. When you find the one you want, release **B**.

SECRET MISSIONS

Go to **VRGN1, 2, 3, 4** and **5** to check out some of the best bonus levels ever. Sly is transported to the Virgin offices where you can blow away the game's designers, programmers and even marketing people.

VARIOUS

GMOVER - shows the game over screen.

GMWNNR - shows winner screen.

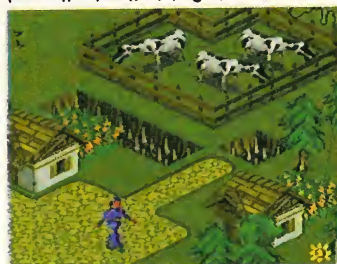
CRDTS - shows the development team credits.

SCORS - shows the high scores.

LSTNG#BTH - accesses the sound test menu.

THE HORDE

To access *The Horde's* built-in cheats you need to know how to spell words using the joypad. There are six letters in total - **U** (**Up** on the **D-Pad**), **D** (**Down**), **L** (**Left**), **R** (**Right**), **O** (**Button**



A) and **T** (**Button B**).

To enter words start the game. Press **Up**, hold down **A** and **B** and **Pause** the game. While **Paused** spell one of the following words:

DOLLDOOR: Finish the current habitat and return to the castle

LOOTLORD: 30,000 Crowns for free

LOUDTOOT: Reveals the entire map

ODDROD: Allows you to continue even if your village is no more

TROLLDROOL: Allows you to buy all objects at the shop

TROT: Run twice as fast

TURDODOR: Invulnerability

JAMMIT

Enter **BBSKNNR** at the password

screen to play the Boss round on this technically poor but damned addictive ghetto game.

POWERS KINGDOM

This odd little RPG, reviewed back in **3DO Magazine • 1**, may get a bit repetitive, but the visuals are genuinely weird and the combat quite engrossing. Known as *Guardian Wars* in the US, it was recently offered as the pack-in game with the **FZ-1** so quite a few of you should enjoy this cheat!



CHEAT MENU

Either start a new game or reload an old one, then when the menu screen appears with the game locations and flags, press **L, R** and **C** in turn. The flags should freeze. Next press **Up, Down, Left** and **Right**. Another menu now appears in Japanese. From top to the bottom, the options translate as: Load Game, Equip, Shop (enter a shop where every item in the game can be bought or sold), Gems +10,000 (get a little extra cash), No Battles (prevents enemies attacking you, or vice versa*), Co-ordinates (shows x/y position*), Free Movement (can enter almost any location, regardless of whether previous ones have been cleared*), All Attacks (all the weapons and magic are available in combat*), God Mode (during battles neither your HP or MP can be harmed), Map Detail (loads more detail), ?? (Unknown), ?? (Unknown), Basic +1 (increase level of currently selected Golem by one), Class +1 (increase level of currently selected body or sub-body by one).

***Turn on/off**

REBEL ASSAULT

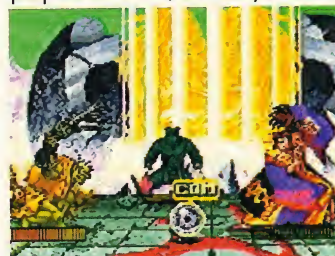
The following codes were also sent in by Tim Wardle. They allow you to access every level in *Rebel Assault* in either Normal or Hard mode, for non-Jedi Knights only.



NORMAL: BOTHAN, HERGLIN, LEENI, THRAWN, LWYLL, MAZZIC, JULPA, MORRT, MUFTAK, RASKAR, JHOFF, ITHOR, UMWAK, ORLOK; NULLON
HARD: BORDOK, SKYNX, DEFEL, JEDGAR, MADINE, TARKIN, MOTHMA, GLAYYD, OTTEGA, RISH II, IZRI-NA, KARRDE, VONZEL, OSSUS, MALANI

SAMURAI SHODOWN

Programmed by many of the same people behind *SFII*, this flashy beat-



'em-up prefers swords and razor claws to fists and feet. Gorgeous backdrops, stunning CD music and plenty of blood splashing all over the place make this a 3DO mega-hit that's still an office favourite. We have two fun cheats to get even more out of the game.

For **Same Color Opponents**, start one-player game. Join in with player two and pick the player the computer was using. Kill player one, but don't continue. Start with one-player game again. Join in with controller one, and again pick the same character the

computer was using. Kill player two. Now when new one player game starts, you will be the same character and color as the computer.

Somewhat less esoteric is **Stage Select**. Play a game and lose. Don't continue. Go to **Menu Screen** and select **Resume**. Now press **L, X, D, U, R, L, U, X**. Now, **highlight players name** and use **LS** and **RS** to select stage. Warning: to delete this option, you must delete all *Samurai Shodown* save games.

SHOCKWAVE & OPERATION JUMP GATE

While some are put off by *ShockWave's* huge levels and quirky save system (quit the game during a level and you may lose your save position), there's no doubt it's an exceptionally impressive package. The FMV sequences are just about the best around, providing a highly involving narrative, while the Dolby Surround Sound is simply fantastic and in-game 3D superb. Night-time Las Vegas, superbly animated winged transport ships over England and much, much more make the first game well worth another look. The *JumpGate* mission disk boasts even more impressive graphics, but it also a lot tougher. With the awesome-looking *Shock Wave II* on the way, now's the time to revisit these intense blast-'em-ups with the aid of some brilliant codes from Wayne Drury (Wayne@wdrury.demon.co.uk) and Laurent Benes (lbenes@ea.com).

SHOCKWAVE ONLY

Press pause while playing, then enter code. Each code *must* be preceded by **BACCAAX** before using any other code. **BACCAAX**: Allows loops and spins with Shift-Up and Shift-Down controller keys.

CAABAX: Very good missiles (1000 points each, fast moving, rapid fire). Once per mission.

CAABACAX: Very good lasers.

ACABAACAAAX: Smart bomb, once per mission.

ABACAABAX: Player becomes invincible, infinite everything. Once per player.

BABX: Displays the name of the player.

BACACAX: Displays programmer message.

SHOCKWAVE AND OPERATION JUMP GATE

Start a mission, press pause while

using the laser (I insist on this point, the laser must be in used when you hit pause). You are now with the pause screen (and some laser is visible on



the screen). You now carefully press the following sequence of key:

BABAAABABAC.

You now press stop to quit the game. **THE GAME SHOULD NOT QUIT!** If it does quit, then you failed in something above.

Remember that the **GOD** mode stops when you quit a mission, so you must redo the sequence above when starting (or restarting) a mission.

Once you're god, you can use all the following passwords without restriction or limitation.

To use one of these passwords, just press pause during the mission, press the following sequence of **A, B** and **C** keys, and then press quit. **THE GAME SHOULD NOT QUIT**. If it does, then you failed in the password input or you forgot to become **GOD** first. **BACCAAA**: Quit the mission successfully.

CAAAACA: Increase the current mission number.

For example, use this password 9 times while playing mission 1 and then quit, the next mission you will play will be mission 10.

CAABA: Very good missiles (powerful, fast, rapid reload).

CAABACA: Very good lasers.

ACABAACAAA: Smart Bomb.

ABACAABA: Player becomes invincible (infinite everything).

BAB: Display the name of the player.

BACACA: Display the programmer's message.

BAAAABA: Refill of all your energy levels and missiles (Only *Operation JumpGate*).

Now save the world!

SOCCER KID

Change the Kid's colours by pressing Up and Down and Left and Right at the title screen on this enjoyable but pretty tricky platformer.

STELLAR 7

To gain **INFINITE ENERGY** and

POWER UPS enter the following at the main menu with controller one:

L, R, R, L, R, L, L, L, L, L, L, L, L, R, L, L, L, L, L, R, L, L, R.

The *Stellar 7* logo should change to *Wimpy 7*. Use the **L** and **R** buttons now to replace energy and gain power-ups.

SSFII TURBO

While we've printed the one-player Akuma cheat before, thanks to Wayne we've now got some background detail and a two-player version! It turns out Akuma is the brother of Sheng Long and they both share the same teacher. It's said Akuma killed Sheng, who was Ken and Ryu's master, to gain a total power.

To get control of Akuma in two-player mode is easy, just hold down all six buttons on the character selection screen – usually it's the second player to select who gets him. And in case you missed issue 3, for one player mode you have to follow this intricate



code on the select screen: start with Ryu, wait 2 seconds, then go to T-Hawk, wait 2 seconds, then go to Guile, wait 2 seconds, then go to Cammy (passing Dhalsim), wait 2 seconds. Then go back to Ryu and wait 2 seconds before pressing the 3 punches buttons and the **X** button. Ryu's pic is replaced by Akuma's evil silhouette. It's tricky to pull off, but does work!

AKUMA'S MOVES:

Dragon Punch: F, D, DF, F

Fireball: D, DF, F

Red Fireball: B, DB, D, DF, F

Air Fireball: Jump + D, DF, F

Hurricane Kick: D, DB, B

Teleport: F, D, DF, F + 3 punch or 3 kick

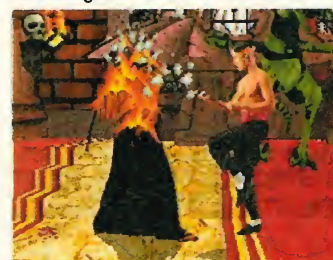
SUPER WING COMMANDER

To access the Debug menu go to the lounge, press and hold down **X** and then press **B, B, C, C, A, A, A**. A sound informs you of your success. The most interesting new option is the **System Flags** one. Set **KILLABLE** to False and you can't die. Set **BANGABLE** to False and you won't be

able to collide with anyone else. Set **FINGER OF DEATH** to True and, in-game, you can destroy any targeted enemy by pressing **L, R** and **B** at the same time. Fail to have something targeted and you'll destroy everyone, including your Wingmen, in the area immediately around you. Finally set **PICKER ACCESS** to True, return to the lounge, cycle through the Options until you hear Choose Campaign or Choose Mission. You'll then be able to select every possible mission.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Play a **VERSUS** mode match with **High Abbot** against **Kull** in the Throne



Room. Allow High Abbot to win and then rematch. The game goes very weird...

WING COMMANDER III

This 4 CD epic has plenty enough challenge to keep most people occupied until M2 arrives, let alone another 3DO



I mega-game. Besides the total victory scenario, there are multiple other endings and routes through the game. But if your campaign has run into a dead-end, try this handy cheat. Turn on the 3DO system and when you get to the New Game/ Load Game/Continue screen, hold down **LS** and **P** together. The selection will now cycle through the three options. Press **A** when it's on Continue and the debug screen should appear. Just as with *Super Wing Commander*, the most useful option is **Finger Of Death**. To use it, select a target and press **X** and **A** while in flight. This will instantly wipe-out any target highlighted, including friendlies. □

3DO Magazine

The Need For Speed

Fantastic cheats for the greatest racing game ever

SCOOTER OPPONENT

If even the Mazda RX-7 is giving you tough competition, why not put your smarmy opponent on a scooter! That'll teach him... Well, maybe not. The scooter is actually pretty nippy and can easily weave through heavy traffic. Fortunately, once input the scooter stays active so you can race it across all the different tracks. Despite being a cheat, the scooter graphic is superb.



To get the cheat working, start a level and play it for ten seconds. Then call up instant replay and rewind to the beginning. Now press **R**, **Down** and **B** simultaneously on **joypad two**. Quit the race and when you restart it you'll find a scooter beside you! The scooter is apparently a self-portrait by track designer Sheila Allen, with 3D programming by Mark Tessman.

TURBO TURBO

Scooter giving you hassle, how about supercharging your car by boosting engine torque and power by a whop-

EA Canada are not only trailblazing the way for 3DO gaming, they're also way out in front with hidden game features. After the wonderfully wacky FIFA cheats, they've now revealed equally weird fun in the incomparable Need For Speed. Thanks to Marcus (Torc Software), Wayne Drury (Wayne@wdrury.demon.co.uk) and Doug Dyer (dyer@alx.sticomet.com) for their help with these.

ping 20-30%?

To activate this, start a level and then immediately press **L**, **R** and **Up** on **pad two**, plus **L**, **R**, **A** and **C** on **pad three**. If the cheat's been activated, the game will flash up a 'car crashed' warning. From now until when you turn off, the cheat will be enabled. The fastest cars are boosted by 20% and the slowest by 30%! While you can't exceed the maximum published fig-

ures of the cars, the radically increased engine torque makes for breathtaking acceleration!

NO DASH

If you're tired of your car's dashboard, why not get rid of it? The difference isn't merely cosmetic as simplifying the screen display brings extra speed which, when combined with Turbo Turbo, can make for an absolutely breathtaking performance.

To get the cheat working, press **up**, **L** and **A** on **joypad two** at any time while playing. Every time you press it, the dash will cycle through four variants: full dashboard, no dash but exterior rev counter and rear-view mirror, no dash but rev counter, and no dash with no instruments.

BLOW 'EM AWAY

Even for veteran players this is an absolutely unmissable cheat. With the press of a single button, every car on screen is sent spinning into the air! It's the stressed out commuter's dream seeing a logjam of traffic, your race opponent and even the cop car go

whizzing into the sky, before tumbling back to earth. Be careful though, occasionally it takes your car out too!

To activate the cheat (1) start a level and during loading press **L & R & left** on **pad one**, then quit.

2: Restart level and during loading press

L & R & up on **pad one**, then quit.

3: Restart level and during loading press **L & R & right** on **pad one**, then quit.

4: Restart level and during loading press **L & R & down** on **pad one**, then quit.

5: Start the level again and every time you press '**X**', everything on screen will fly into the air!

SOLO SPECIAL

If you're tired of all that traffic and those annoying cops, why not get rid of them? In control central go to the options menu and highlight skill level.

On **pad one**, press **X + R + A + L** in rapid succession holding each one down as you get to it. Then lift them all up and start again - this is tricky to do and so far we haven't got it right, but we're assured it is correct!

If you do it right and enough times the text will turn from yellow to purple. No records or times can be saved in this mode!

BLACK TO BASICS

If you really think you've mastered the entire game - won bonus cars on every stage of every level, beat the 512TR with a Viper on Alpine... -



well, there's one more challenge to face. Start a level and play for ten seconds, then rewind to the start. On pad one hold down **B** and on pad two press **X**, **P** and **C**. A 'car crashed' warning should appear. Now play against the clock on the Alpine level - for just that added little frisson of excitement, all the road on the final stage has been covered with ice. The graphics are the same, but the feel is murder!

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

To see the geniuses responsible for this software masterpiece, sit back and wait after a race has finished. When the credits start to roll, press **R** and **L** to flip between the normal backdrop and a picture of the NFS programming crew. □ ssw

The Need For Speed
Published By: Electronic Arts
© 01753 549442
Price: £44.99

3DO Magazine

The Horde

Bash those Hordlings in style with Crystal Dynamics...

When placing cows, keep in mind that they need room to graze. If they're placed too close together, the ground will turn to rubble and the cows won't produce any income. Allow at least two spaces between each cow to ensure productive seasons.

- Hordlings make a bee line for slabs of meat, so placing a knight or bomb near a piece of meat can make it their last. A bomb will go off the minute a Hordling is in range, and a knight will lop off their heads (remember that a knight's sword is far more effective than yours).
- The items used on one terrain cannot be transferred to the next, so during the building sequence of the last winter, dig up any and every tree, cow, fence, knight, etc. and cash them in for crowns, which are taken over to successive levels.
- Be cautious when fending off Hordlings, as getting hit by one will damage you, possibly kill and at least knock you back a bit.
- Never give up, even if the Hordlings are ravaging the populace, because they rely on your help! If a Hordling smashes down a house and swallows the resident, you can still save the poor peasant by killing the masticating Hordling before it burps.
- Practice taking a step or two before taking a second swing at more powerful Hordlings. This will pace your attacks and make a dizzy attack less likely. Your swordsmanship improves through the years, allowing you to gradually swing more times before getting dizzy.
- Budget your spending (just like real life, eh?). Come tax time, if you haven't got the readies, the Evil Chancellor will send you to the dungeon, game over. Sometimes the Chancellor will give you a gift for progressing, and remember,

One of the most engrossing games available on 3DO, *The Horde* demands some thoughtful strategy and expert horticultural planning as well as skilful swordplay. Here's a guide to gameplay and some bizarre secrets, plus tips for the tougher levels...

some Hordlings drop coins when they're killed which you can collect to boost your wallet.

- During the building phase of the game, dig up anything that resembles red fungus or living rot, as it could harm your crops. Tunnelling Hordlings can appear from gopher holes, so if you see any, dig them up to delay arrival.
- The knights charges 30 crowns per turn and the archers 60, so place them sparingly to save cash.
- Use the flute and Morningstar in combination to wipe out bunches of Hordlings. The tweaked out music from the flute will lead them into the destructive Morningstar.
- Another great combo with the flute is the water. Play the flute whilst standing in a body of water to lead the Hordlings to a water-logged death. Remember that some Hordlings take a while to drown, so don't stand still for too long. And the Juggernaut Hordlings don't drown, sadly, so don't bother trying...
- When you hear the call of the Shaman Hordling, take him out first, since he has the revolting (and depressing) ability to make new Hordlings out of the eyeballs of the dead...

THE SHIMTO PLAINS

The first village you must protect from the Horde. Since you start the game with just twenty-five crowns, you need to earn money fast. Use about twenty crowns to plant seedlings about the terrain and, as the seasons change, harvest grown trees and replace them with seedlings. Planting a tree costs a crown and digging one up will pay you five. Plant them!

Continue a steady cycle of trees to supply a good amount of income. To ensure a prosperous growth, plant

seedlings a couple of spaces apart.

THE TREE REALMS OF ALBURGA

Don't harm the trees! If you dig one up, accident or not, you permanently lose a life point for the rest of the game. If you're caring enough to bring twenty-five new trees to the forest, Jaia, a tree spirit, will endow you with the rather handy Boots Of Boogie, which would otherwise cost you 300 crowns. You can now speed about the terrain at high speed!

THE FIELD SWAMP OF BUUZAL

Swamp Hordlings thrive in the murky waters, so be sure to position knights and archers on solid land, so that wading Hordlings don't attack them from underneath.

Whilst in the building phase of the game, keep an eye out for any frogs hopping about the screen. If they go under the swampy water, quickly move to the spot and dig. You'll have a 30% chance of retrieving between ten and 500 crowns.

At the later years of the scenario, two rock formations will form in different sections of the land. The formations will resemble arrows, and the invisible intersection they cross will be the location of the Flute, which can be used to lure Hordlings. Just dig at the cross point and save yourself the 500 crowns the Flute would've cost at the shop!

THE KAR-NYAR DESERT

Desert Hordlings are scrawny and long horned, and can burrow through the sand. Don't place knights and archers



on the sand unless you want the ugly Hordlings to gulp them down.

As the years go by, you'll notice a few strange items, such as Green Meat, Purple Nuts and Blue Fruit. You'll also see a Green Vine or Bamboo Shoot. Dig a moat to the vine and it will sprout into a fruitful tree. Wimbli will introduce himself and ask for some food. Drop the three new-found items for him to eat, and in return, Wimbli will give you his Trident, a super powerful and thoroughly desirable weapon.

THE FROZEN WASTELANDS OF VESH

Bombs, Rosco and the Super Scorchor will not harm the Snow Hordlings. Use your sword to knock oncoming snowballs thrown by them, but if they start rolling up a big snowball, steer clear.

To retain fertile land and keep the village growing, drop bombs on the snow to blow away clear spaces. You can also place cows on the snow to cultivate the land, or you can expand the waterways during the summer, making the land close to the water thaw.

There's seven years of taxes to pay, so make sure you get enough income generating quickly. □ cd/mcw

The Horde
Published By: Crystal Dynamics
© 0171 9730011
Price: £39.99

3DO Magazine

competition

3DO
Magazine

Win! 20 FZ-10

In a fabulous competition bonanza



Panasonic Systems

from 3DO Magazine & Panasonic

Panasonic
R·E·A·LTM
3DOTM INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYERTM

The FZ-10 is Panasonic's super sleek second-generation 3DO system. Like all 3DO systems, it's compatible with the full range of 3DO games – more than any other 32bit system – and is ready for the 64bit M2 upgrade. After bringing 3DO to the high

street with the FZ-1, see pg 6-8, Panasonic engineered the FZ-10 for maximum cost-effectiveness with a smaller, lighter flitop box boasting some rather stylish curves. It also boasts a new joypad and a built-in memory management system. Like the FZ-1, it comes with a free copy of Namco's coin-op smash, *StarBlade*. To win your very own 3DO system, all you have to do is answer this easy question: Who designed the original 3DO system?

- a) R. Marmoy & Phil Kipling
- b) Rogers & Hammerstein
- c) RJ Mical & Dave Needle

Now write your answer on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send it to:

Panasonic Gold Giveaway, 3DO Magazine, Paragon House, St. Peter's Road, Bournemouth BH1 1NF. All entries should be received by January 15th. ■

NB: If you decide to buy an FZ-10 and then find you've won one, simply return the unopened package to Paragon Publishing and Panasonic will offer software to an equivalent value. A enticing prospect with forthcoming titles such as *Puzzle Bobble*, *Myst* and *Mortal Kombat III* on the way.

Total Eclipse

The ultimate guide to the ultimate sci-fi blaster

In flat areas during the game, set your ship on a 'full' spectrum firing range.

Set the FireWing at a particular altitude, so that you can take long sweeps from side to side, flying high enough to avoid any terrain. Fire in a constant forward direction, rather than a scattered spray of shots, caused by dipping and diving throughout the landscape.

- Plasma bombs are invaluable life savers when everything's looking bleak (save them!) but they won't kill bosses. Remember, wait 'till the screen is full, then plasma them, and watch your shield strength power up to maximum. If you've got three bombs and you see a fourth to be collected, use one and collect the fourth.

- Take advantage of the constant 1-UP positions. In some areas, two extra lives means you can collect, crash, but keep gaining one life (above the one you've lost). Cheating perhaps, but forgivable.
- Enemies are better strafing a horizontally moving target than a vertically dodging one. Moving up and down to avoid shots makes the enemy change course, slowly, and is therefore a much better defence strategy.

Tunnels

- The bronze security gate seals at a very slow pace. Don't rush through, you'll only lose control and bounce off the gate, just use your shots as a guide to a clear path. If your shots go through the gate okay, so will you.

The cyber gates (that close diagonally) close quicker than the bronze ones, so accelerate when you see one. If it shuts before you reach it, about half your shield energy will be lost.

- The green beams of light that cross the tunnels path increase your ships speed as you pass through them, sometimes propelling you through a wave of enemy shots. Other times, it just lets you

Presented with pride; a brilliant level select is the ultimate Godsend for many readers who've rung us over the months, plus some exclusive tips and level guides from the guys at Crystal Dynamics themselves on the total immersion of Total Eclipse...

into narrow halls. Hold down the deceleration button when passing one to quickly slow your speed down.

- Red beams slow you down, but hold down accelerate to bypass the effect.

- Blue beams damage your ship, so avoid at all costs.

Planet 1: Aqueous Major Round 4

(1-4) Boss: Poseidon

For a first boss, this vessel is tough. Its overhead phaser fires a purple pulse shot, so keep your ship moving in a circular motion to avoid these shots. Land pods are abundant on the ground, so blast them to gain shield energy. When the Boss starts to unload wave bombs, make long left to right sweeps with your ship, leading the bombs to detonate without damaging you. When it closes in, stay at point blank firing range and blast. When it zooms in, it doesn't launch any weapons (and doesn't get close enough to hit you).

Planet 2: Magma Prime Round 8 (2-4)

Boss: Vulcano

To defeat the mountain top you'll need to blast out both eyes (one at a time is best). You must wait until they're red before you shoot them, but before they change, waves of yellow shots will spread out from its mouth. Wait for them to come at you, then swerve left or right. If your shield strength drops, swing to the far left or right and destroy the single gun turrets and land pods. The Stellar Guard weapon is great against Vulcano, so collect it!

Planet 3: Solarius Centuria 12 (3-4)

Boss: Conundrum

Conundrum's characteristics are similar to those of Poseidon, except for the detaching weapon sections that circle in front of the boss, firing like crazy. After picking the weapon of your choice, slide to the right and hover just above

the small ledge, so your shots can destroy the land pod. This is a good altitude to keep your ship, and if you're good, you can beat the boss by sliding left to right, without having to climb and dive. When the boss does split, stay in one spot for a second to fake him, before dodging and retaliating.

Planet 4: Polaris 5 Round 16 (4-4)

Boss: Cobra

Equipped with multiple weapons, Cobra is a smaller target than previous bosses. The rockets that fire from its side silos will miss you if the boss isn't moving, spreading to the left and right, but will probably connect if the ship begins sweeping. When the rotor blade action begins, climb and dive to steer clear, remembering that land pods are rare.

In round 3, there's a Graveyard, with many different power-ups, reached thus: at the start of round three, there's a three-way branch, go left then proceed through the following branches right, right, left, right, left and finally right. Keep a high altitude (the tunnel's raised) and enter the tractor beam to a tunnel. The first tunnel will be full of enemies as well as power-ups, but when you exit you'll be taken to the graveyard, which has numerous tunnels. All take you back to the start, except the last one which throws you into the next round.

Planet 5: Sun Dagger Round 20 (5-4)

Boss: Mother

In round two, tunnels are set up to place you back in different points of the terrain, a section that easily becomes frustrating. Here's an easy guide.

From the first terrain, you'll want to fly to the end of the area, and into the second tractor beam. When you come out of the tunnel and into the next area, a tractor beam will be in the centre of the terrain. Pass it and continue flying



until the path splits. When it does, follow the path left. The next time it splits, take a right into the tractor beam. Now you'll wind up in the last area. Stay along the left lining of the terrain and you'll lead yourself to the finish.

To reach the boss you need to pilot through a trench of dead ends and hostile enemies. Plasma bombs are needed for the boss, which is big and relatively easy to hit. Land pods are hidden behind small towering walls. After you beat the boss, you'll have to enter one last tractor beam. Inside, you'll spiral through a long tunnel, with no enemies, just spheres. Bounce through and it's game over.

LEVEL SELECT

At the Start/Options screen, highlight the Quit/Previews menu. Hold down the X button and tap B, L then A. Let go of the X button, then two more times tap in B, L, A. At the last press of A you'll hear a tone and a Round Select screen will appear in the picture box.

99 LIVES!

Start the game, pause and go to the option screen. Rotate to Resume Game over the picture in the right. Press B, A, C, A, B, A, L and press L and R simultaneously, then X, X. A skull will appear. Press START and a big skull will fill the screen. Press A, A, B, B, C, C, L, L, R, R, START. Return to game with a magnificent 99 lives. □ cd/mcw

Total Eclipse
Published By: Crystal Dynamics
© 0171 9730011
Price: £39.99

3DO Magazine

To understand just how big a leap M2 represents you have to understand the concept as much as the technology. The name M2 Accelerator suggests it's akin to a turbocharger bolted onto your old car – same engine, but a fair bit more horsepower. It's a neat marketing concept and makes it clear that if you have 3DO I, you won't have to buy a whole new machine to get 3DO II performance. That's reassuring, but can you really make the leap to full blooded, next, next generation performance with just a few extra chips?

No. To put it simply, M2 does not enhance 3DO I, it eats it alive. M2 is an entirely new machine, built around a screamingly fast 528MB/sec databus with 64bit custom chips. There are no compromises for 3DO I compatibility, M2 will use only the host machine's CD-ROM drive and power supply – accessing the custom chips or RAM would slow M2 down too much to be of significant use. Restrictions on the old machine, such as screen resolution, simply no longer apply. This uncompromised design makes 3DO M2 easily the world's most powerful videogames system, yet at the same time it's fully compatible with 3DO I software so that it can be released both as an upgrade and a new, standalone machine.

The reason why 3DO's technology is so flexible comes down to two reasons. Firstly, they own the rights to all the chips in 3DO I – including the ARM60 CPU – and as technology advances they're free to incorporate the chips into a single ASIC. Secondly, the 3DO system is designed around an operating system. This impenetrable layer of software sits between hardware and games, allowing the various chips to be radically changed without incompatibility problems. It's the same way IBM PCs work and has other significant advantages for M2.

While in hardware terms M2's a whole new machine, in software terms it really is just an Accelerator. The old Operating System will be much the same, albeit slimmed down to save memory, while most of the existing programming tools still work. The 2D programming libraries, for example,

M2 TECH SPEC

CPU: Custom version of PowerPC 602 running at 66MHz.

Co-processors: 10 for graphics/audio.

Polygon handling: 1,000,000 polygons/sec

700,000+ polygons/sec with all effects (see below).

Pixel throughput: 100,000,000/sec

Custom Graphics: Destination-based texture-mapping

Texture compression

Pixel-level Gouraud shading

Alpha channel pixel averaging and anti-aliasing.

MIP mapping

Z-Buffering

Screen Resolution: 680x480 (16bit or 24bit colour)

320x240 (16bit or 24bit colour)

Databus bandwidth: 528MB/sec

Sound: DSP running at 66MHz

32 Channels with MPEG audio decompression/interpolation on all channels.

Memory: 4MB SDRAM

2MB ROM

Save Game: PCMCIA Slot

32K NVRAM on 3DO I

Expansion: PCMCIA 3DO Card slots for peripherals such as modems.

VideoCD Capability: Yes. MPEG1 is built into the system. Version 2.0 control software means it should play both NTSC and PAL discs.



Two years after launching the next generation war with 3DO I, the 3DO Company has unveiled its plans for the next leap forward. The Mark 2 Accelerator will be both an add-on and the core of a new, 3DO II console. The technology is incredibly advanced and will make it undoubtedly the world's most powerful videogames system. Stuart Wynne explains why the future belongs to 3DO.

are virtually unchanged although the processing horsepower they can access will be massively increased. As it generally takes about two years to master a new system, the 3DO approach is a real boon – and also ensures its core is incredibly robust and reliable having been solid use for two years. Where there are significant changes is 3D, with a whole new API brought in with three different levels to suit programmers of varying experience with 3D graphics.



HARD-TECH

Although some cynics argue 3DO II is to counter the PlayStation, work actually began on M2 before the first FZ-1 hit the shelves. Upgradeability has always been a key point about 3DO technology and Dave Needle, who designed much of 3DO I's hardware, was the original driving force behind M2. The project received a huge boost when John V. Sells moved over from Motorola, where he'd played a key role in designing the original PowerPC 601 chip [see box-out]. At 3DO, Sells joined former Apple execs Hugh C. Martin and Toby Farrand, giving 3DO strong links with the PowerPC consortium which soon agreed to support the production of a CPU precisely tailored for M2. This immediately raised the stakes for the whole design, which has now evolved into a truly fantastic compendium of built-in special effects, memory compression and ultra-fast data processing.

M2 boasts no less than ten co-processors working alongside the PowerPC CPU. As you might expect, exceptionally fast polygon processing is a key speci-

> fication and 1,000,000 polygons/sec comfortably exceeds the 360,000 claimed for the PlayStation. While this is impressive enough, M2's principal advantage lies in how it handles them. There's a massive array of filters, super-accurate texture-mapping and other features contained within M2's co-processors and massive 2MB of ROM that treat the polygons so they look more realistic.

Rival systems could possibly achieve similar effects by clever software routines, but these take time to develop, burn up processor time and – most important of all – consume lots of extremely valuable RAM. Z-buffering, for example, was supposed to be built-into the PlayStation. The fact that it isn't forces developers to use software routines which significantly reduce that 360,000 polygons/sec statistic. Look at the box for *Toh Shin Den* and you'll see that highly acclaimed beat-'em-up is exceptionally proud of the fact it has 90,000 polygons.

As Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux remarks, "memory is becoming increasingly important" for the real performance of the superconsoles. While PCs now usually come with 8MB as standard, consoles must make do with far less to keep costs down. By building in so many special features, M2's real-world performance will be much closer to its specs. It will also come with a relatively generous 4MB of a special, high-speed form of memory called SDRAM. On a

conventional console, such as PlayStation, memory is segmented with different memory for graphics, sound and general data. So if you want to introduce new data during a level, very complicated juggling tricks need to be performed which effectively restrict the size and variety of a game's levels. M2's super-fast SDRAM, by contrast, is fast enough to be used for any task and, by not being segmented, puts no limits on how programmers use it.

Rapid data handling is particularly critical for M2 due to its exceptionally powerful memory compression techniques. Rather than being offered as an add-on, MPEG decompression is built into M2. Its importance goes far beyond simply supersharp intro graphics and allowing you to play the latest VideoCD movies. The 528Mb/sec bandwidth allows for some very exciting combinations of realtime polygon graphics handling with pixel-sharp FMV. A movie conversion could effortlessly stream movie footage into fully interactive gameplay, even applying it as texture on a moving, light-sourced object.

MPEG is an extremely powerful data compression technique and it can be used on standard game graphics and audio to save memory. M2 will also have its own, custom compression routines built-in as well.

As 3DO points out, even esoteric functions like MIP mapping will help save memory – as MIP mapping prevents rapidly scaling objects from becoming blocky, programmers can use it to cut down their work on designing different graphics for varying distances. It all adds up to a very smart system both in itself, and its potential for the future.

M2's modular approach indicates a clear and dramatic upgrade path for M3, especially given the way the PowerPC chip is likely to develop. M2 also

opens up the 3DO system for peripherals. Rather than using custom expansion ports, M2 uses the PCMCIA standard. This is used for a host of PC peripherals such as modems – which would be a doddle to adapt for M2.

EXPERT ADVICE

Hot technology undoubtedly excites tech-heads, but as 3DO's Bob Faber remarked – M2's principal advantage will be that its games simply look so much better. To translate tech specs into real world

performance we spoke to DMA's Managing Director, David Jones. Besides the huge success of *Lemmings*, DMA has long been renowned for their cutting edge programming and are one of Nintendo's dream team of Ultra64 developers. From this perspective, Jones has no doubt M2's specs offer a "four to five-fold increase" over the performance of the Saturn or PlayStation – and even superior to the *Ridge Racer* arcade machine. "One of the things that lets down the PlayStation and Saturn is the screen display. M2 will allow for a high resolution display just like the arcade. The fact that it's got bi-linear interpolation and MIP mapping also means there'll be



In the battle of the titans, M2 gives 3DO a massive 5-7 leap in graphics processing. At first glance this might not seem immediately apparent here, with the fog obscured Sheena appearing far plainer than Toh Shin Den's Run Go. However, the closer you look at Sheena, the more impressive this crude engineering demo becomes. While Run Go is plainly made up of a limited number of roughly assembled polygons, spotting where polygons begin and end on Sheena is virtually impossible. Moreover, when Sheena moves, knee and arm joints move entirely realistically without breaking up. While PlayStation has made polygons popular, it's M2 that offers the real revolution with graphics which are more about reality than geometry.

no jagged edges."

Another high profile admirer is Archer Maclean, who famously enthused over the PlayStation in an interview two years ago. Maclean still admires that machine, but isn't developing for it because of his disgruntlement over the royalty rate. M2 is attractive because not only is it "ridiculously powerful" but the business model is so much fairer.

David Jones believes there's no doubt M2's specs will at the least put it in the same league as Ultra64 – 'way past cool' in regard to Sega or Sony. 3DO >

JARGON-BUSTING

24bit colour: Basically you can have 24 colours for each bit of your screen display, selectable from a palette of over 16 million colours – which is more than the human eye can distinguish between.

Alpha Channel pixel averaging/anti-aliasing: On a conventional console the diagonal edges of graphics are often jagged due to way pixels are arranged. On M2, the alpha channel is used so that individual pixels on a sharp edge have a transparency value. The dividing line is thus precisely defined to the pixel level, with overlapping transparencies averaging out pixel breaks for an even more realistic edge. Combined with a hi-res screen resolution, this means M2 can easily replicate the razor-sharp displays of coin-ops such as *Ridge Racer*. It also allows for exceptionally realistic effects such as fog, mist etc.

Destination-based texture mapping: This uses the Z-buffer for more accurate texturing to prevent the warping which tends to happen when you close to a wall in *Monster Manor*, or *Ridge Racer* for that matter.

Gouraud shading: In the real world, few objects are simple polygons – most shapes are partly rounded. Gouraud shading refines conventional light-sourcing to provide a softer, more realistic effect on curved surfaces.

Light sourcing: A system whereby 3D objects' colours vary in shade according to their relation to the position of one or more 'light sources'.

MPEG1: Motion Pictures Expert Group standard 1. An audio/visual compression standard used by VideoCD discs. Not only is this built into M2, but it's integrated in a way which allows developers to treat MPEG footage just like any other data. You could, for example, apply MPEG footage to an object just like any other texture map.

MIP Mapping: With conventional computer graphics, the closer you get, the more blocky the image becomes. MIP Mapping acts to keep images sharp by automatically recalculating an image's design as it gets closer. It also ensures the scaling of objects as they move closer is exceptionally smooth and without ugly transitions.

PCMCIA: Personal Computer Memory Card International Association. Despite the name, the standard promoted by PCMCIA is now used for a wide range of PC peripherals such as modems.

Pixel throughput: This often overlooked capability is critical for machine's screen display. M2's 100 million pixels per second throughput means the screen can be redrawn 20 times a frame. A figure impossible without M2's special SDRAM.

SDRAM: Synchronous Dynamic Random Access Memory. This is a new technology designed to offer increased speed, especially for graphics, over conventional DRAM. It works by synchronising its various parts to a clock, radically reducing the memory checking pauses of conventional DRAM. As a consequence there's no distinction in M2 between video memory (fast) and normal memory (slow) – it's all fast!

Z-buffering: This is where 3D objects' z-axis (depth) positions are automatically plotted so that when one object moves in front of the other, the rear graphic is properly obscured or 'clipped'. It also means M2 automatically concentrates on calculating what appears on screen, rather than unseen objects, further saving time.

COMPARISON CHART

MACHINE	CPU	DATABUS	INTEGER MATH	FPU/MFLOPS	EXTRA FPU
PLAYSTATION	R3000	32	14	-	No
SATURN	SH-2	32	14	-	No
ULTRA64	R4300	32	45	15	No
M2	PPC602	64	45	132	Yes

[The main point of this chart is sheer math. Throwing about thousands of polygons in a 3D world requires prodigious amounts of math. However, computers aren't necessarily all that good at math because of the limited memory they have to contain the sums involved. To get around this problem, computers move or 'float' the exponent for very large (or small) numbers. Most high performance computers have Floating Point Unit co-processors to speed-up this task, but M2 has two. One built into the PowerPC 602 CPU and another in the custom ASIC.]

This close-up on the same dinosaur as illustrated bottom, shows just how detailed it really is. Even at this close range, the eye and the dinosaur's skin remain sharp and smooth – without pixelation. The dinosaur is rendered out of polygons, then texture mapped with special filtering applied.



Below, 1: Bossie the cow in fog. 2: Here you can see M2's 64bit MIP mapping in action, automatically recalculating an image so that it remains sharp and coherent however close you get. 3: you see Bossie's image – and that of the chain-link fence – pixelate into unrealistic blocks on a conventional, 32bit system. MIP mapping is a major breakthrough for videogames, not only preventing bitmapping but also saving memory as artists normally have to draw several different graphics for varying distances.

Below we see the dinosaur with Sheena. Note the realistically curved contours of both fighters – M2 allows for so many polygons, figures can appear totally realistic. The fog is used to illustrate the power of M2's custom filters – rather than a flat, grey overlay, the fog's opacity is calculated exponentially. That is, the further away an object is, the more obscured it becomes. While this might seem a minor graphical flourish, technically it's an exceptionally impressive demonstration of M2's sophistication. No other console could recreate this effect.



INDUSTRY REACTION

It's the greatest bit of kit I've ever seen."

John Kavanagh, Demark OS, Vice-President.

"One of the biggest frustrations of a game creator is watching a great concept crushed by inadequate system performance. With the M2, that will no longer happen; we are entering an era where the primary limitation is our imagination."

Mark Cerny, VP of Technology, Universal Interactive Studios.

"I saw the PSX. I saw the Saturn. I saw the Ultra64, and then I saw the M2 and literally my jaw fell open."

Baron R.K. Wolfsheld, MD, Silent Software.

"The M2 and its revolutionary design and ground-breaking features provide us with an excellent vehicle to deliver our software to consumers and meet our goals to stay on the leading edge of this fast-paced industry."

Dick Lehrberg, V-P, Interplay Productions.

"The one thing we're really excited about is that it's able to process over a million shaded polygons per second which means you can virtually render anything in real time... you just have to look at the polygon performance per second to see which machine offers the most chance of dazzling gameplay."

Randy Scott, CEO, Art Data Interactive.

"If it lives up to that spec, it looks very interesting. MIP mapping is a very impressive technology, especially if it's built-in, while built-in z-buffering could save a lot of time... With modular programming, porting games is relatively easy but we'd have to be convinced the spec is real, and the market is viable, first."

Ian Turnbull, Tribe Software Development Manager, Ocean.

"The type of features discussed here today, Gouraud shading, filtered textures, 30 frame per second animations, and Onyx level performance will take gamers into a new level of immersion. We plan to take advantage of the M2 technology in developing for the new platform."

Steven Weinstein, V-P, Spectrum Holobyte.

"Very impressive, significantly out in front from the rest of the pack. If I rated the other two superconsoles as a four and a five, M2 would be a ten. We're definitely developing for it."

Peter Malyneux, Managing Director, Bullfrog.

"It looks pretty much like 3DO. M2 will be a third generation machine... If it proves to be as fast as 3DO are saying then, technologically at least, there's going to be little that can touch it."

Bruce McMillan, Project Manager, EA Canada.

"The M2 system takes full advantage of the PowerPC architecture and its price/performance benefits. We look forward to working with 3DO to assure the success of the M2 platform."

Kevin Meyer, VP, Motorola.

"A superlative piece of hardware. If they get enough market penetration, there's no doubt we'd love to develop for it."

Fergus McGovern, Managing

Director, Probe Software.

"We're very excited about M2 and will definitely manufacturing the system. We believe M2 takes away any cloud of uncertainty about which system to buy today."

Andrew Chorzelski, Marketing Manager, GoldStar.

"Absolutely mind-boggling. I've seen some very impressive demos on all the new machines, but M2 was much more impressive."

Tony Kavanagh, Managing Director, Krisalis Software.

"It sounds good. If it lives up to its claims - and I mean in price and availability as well as spec - it will be excellent."

David Braben, Frontier Developments.

"If it lives up to that spec, M2 will be ridiculously powerful."

Archer MacLean, programmer at Dropzone, Jimmy White's Snooker & Pool.

"Specs are very, very good - well in excess of the arcade machines for Ridge Racer and Daytona. If they can do that for \$200 it'll be quite amazing."

David Jones, Managing Director, DMA Design.

"We're 100% committed to a 64bit system. There's absolutely no question about it."

Richard Marmoy, 3DO Marketing Manager, Panasonic.

"The technology is outstanding and supercedes all the existing superconsoles. 7-10 times better than the PlayStation is probably an exaggeration, but it is considerably better. For us, the main advantage is simply M2's speed. The higher polygon count is really welcome and the 4MB of SDRAM would make it feasible to convert our latest PC flight sim, Eurofighter. If we see a good business opportunity with M2, there's no doubt we'd love to develop for it."

Colin Bell, Development Director, DID.

"The M2 technology blows everything we've seen or are going to see from the competition. US Electronics is actively investing significant time and resources into making M2 the next standard in the advanced gaming market. We support the M2 technology 100 percent."

Jim Ineson, VP HiMedia Group, LO Electronics (GoldStar).

"They've leapfrogged over the Sony rather than try to match it. It's very powerful, especially given that it seems to be doing everything properly. For example, things like the texture-mapping, which is source texturing rather than target texturing. [On PlayStation] you have to break your polygons up into teeny weeny little ones to make the texturing look reasonably right... We'd be very keen to develop for M2 if we see a market."

Andrew Braybrook, Graftgold.

"We have worked closely with IBM, Motorola, and 3DO over the past year to develop the M2 technology to provide new levels of performance and responsiveness in interactive entertainment. We are very pleased with image quality, speed, processing power and overall performance of this technology. Our commitment to delivering M2 products is very strong."

Hiroyuki Tachibana, Director, Interactive Media Division, Matsushita.



> themselves claim M2 is two to three times better than even Ultra64, "which has just a 40k cache for texture maps" without even mentioning the far higher storage capacity of CDs over Ultra64's carts.

NEXT LEVEL GAMING

Hardware is nothing without software and 3DO have learnt their lesson well from the first machine's launch. There will be 3-5 titles available on the day of machine's launch that will be equivalent of top coin-op titles in name recognition. 3DO and Panasonic are actually negotiating with US and Japanese coin-op manufacturers to have M2 technology used in the arcades. For 80% less cost, M2 offers 30% performance better than the Model 2 hardware Sega use for *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Fighters 2*.

PowerPC

The original PowerPC technology was developed by a powerhouse consortium of Apple, IBM and Motorola. By using advanced RISC architecture, they plan to smash Intel's domination of the PC market with its increasingly costly, CISC-based 80xx86 series - currently spearheaded by Pentium. Already, Apple have successfully moved over to the new technology and the design has won respect for offering superior performance at substantially less cost than Intel designs. Sega, for example, have recently announced they'll use PowerPC chips for their new arcade machines.

M2 uses a version of a brand-new PowerPC chip, the 602, specifically designed for high performance consumer electronics. For M2, the chip has been further customised to make it even more powerful. It has a data/instruction cache of 64Kbits and is capable of an exceptional 132 MFLOPS (Million Floating Point

Operations per Second). By way of comparison, Sony claim the PlayStation's custom ASIC - including the CPU - has one million transistors and runs at 33MHz. The PowerPC 602 has 2.5 million transistors and runs twice as fast. That equals about five times the processing power - without mentioning M2's ten coprocessors. While these were designed by 3DO, their integration into a single ASIC was handled by Motorola's world-leading Somerset plant. The complexity of the ASIC rivals that of a Pentium and uses a five-layer metal process. This was developed by IBM and has only been licensed

to PowerPC and Intel. All other manufacturers are restricted to far less effective three-layer metal. None of 3DO's console rivals have access to such world-leading technology and, as the PowerPC consortium continues to develop new chips, the upgrade path for M3 and beyond looks exceptionally bright.





M2 EXPERIENCE

Richly detailed worlds
Multiple, complex 3D characters
Photo-realistic images
Natural visual frame rate
VHS-quality video
Theatre-quality sound

GRAPHICS PIPELINE

Graphics Transformation.....PowerPC 602
Polygon Set-Up.....Set-Up Engine
Rendering.....GPU

[While 3DO I and the PlayStation ease pressure on the CPU by passing graphic rendering to a graphics processor, that still leaves the time consuming polygon set-up routines. M2 is the first machine with a three-stage graphics pipeline, introducing a new Set-Up Engine to accelerate graphics handling.]

HIGH PERFORMANCE MEMORY ARCHITECTURE

•528MB/sec. peak PowerBus custom architecture
•4MB SDRAM [32 Megabit] + 2MB ROM
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its backcatalog. As important as new games are the growing numbers, maturity and playability of 3DO I games provide an increasingly healthy foundation.

There are over 200 3DO I games worldwide, and titles such as *Space Hulk*, *BattleSport*, *PO'ed*, *Star Fighter* etc suggest the best is very much to come.



This Doom-style game is probably the most advanced of Studio 3DO's M2 projects. Besides being far higher-res than anything seen on lesser machines, M2's advanced memory architecture allows for a far more varied and exciting environment. A harmless rug smoothly morphs into a bizarre, green monster (above), windows open to allow in weird bat-like creatures (left) and (far left) a monster leaps out of a closet, flips over a table and lunges at you before being blasted to atoms. Close examination of the game environment is unbelievably realistic - a mirror even lets you see your character's face!

1996 & BEYOND

Panasonic expect to have M2 on sale in Japan in the autumn of '96, with American and European versions to follow very quickly. Trip Hawkins has gone on record to say he expects a standalone M2 unit to cost no more than an existing 3DO I system, with the M2 upgrade costing even less. 3DO have also announced plans to use the technology for other applications, including PC graphics cards for business use and Digital Video Disc players. Within the industry, there's widespread recognition M2 defines state-of-the-art and great eagerness to develop for it. Sony, by contrast, isn't expected to deliver PlayStation II until 1998 and, even then, will be pushed to match the performance 3DO's world-leading partners have engineered into M2. As for Sega, its ability to develop, and manufacture, a 64bit Saturn II is so doubtful many believe it might eventually become a 3DO licensee itself. Ultra64, despite not being a real 64bit system, is the only console capable of coming close to M2's coin-op visuals. Yet due to being a cart-based system, its games can only be a tiny fraction of the scale which M2 can handle.

Above all, M2 marks a genuine transition point for interactive entertainment. Rather than simply being content with throwing around ridiculous amounts of brightly coloured polygons, M2 ups the spec so high it can fill out the cliché, blocky arcade characters so that they resemble people rather than robots. A huge panoply of special effects have been designed, and built-into the hardware, so that these shapes can be cloaked in light, filters and textures which begin to simulate real-life visuals rather than the polygonised, 16bit bitmaps of the competition. In short, M2 is a step toward the entirely immersive, virtual world dreams of countless sci-fi writers and videogame fans from the day this whole business started. □ ssw

3DO Magazine

Coming Soon

ACCLAIM

Maximum Surge

A post-apocalypse, FMV shoot-'em-up starring Yasmin Bleeth of Baywatch fame. [Soon]

Quarterback Attack With Mike Dikta

Another FMV spectacular putting you in the quarterback's helmet during a fast-moving game of American Football. [Soon]

Slam City With Scottie Pippin

Another interactive movie produced in conjunction with Digital Pictures, this one has a basketball theme. [Soon]

AMERICAN LASER GAMES

Drug Wars

Blast those drug dealers in this neat conversion of the hit arcade game. [Imminent]

Fast Draw Showdown

None of this silly scenario stuff, just straightforward fast draw action with speed and accuracy being essential. [November]

Last Bounty Hunter, The

Apparently ALG's biggest production yet this you as the eponymous hero pursuing Nasty Dan, Handsome Harry and The Cactus Kid. For the first time, the difficulty and order of gameplay will vary according to your shooting skills. [Imminent]

Madison High

ALG's first title to be released for their new 'Games For Her' division. [TBA]

McKenzie & Co

Yet more rapid-fire action. [Soon]

OrbAtak

An original, non-FMV game developed for the arcades using 3DO I technology. A home port should, therefore, be arcade perfect! [Early '96]

Shootout At Old Tucson

Speaks for itself really! [Soon]

ART DATA INTERACTIVE

Chess Wars

A *Battle Chess* for the 32-bit generation, this grafts live-action footage onto an advanced chess engine. Scripted by Paul Cooper, the winner of three Emmys, and costing so far half a million dollars to produce, this should be fun. [TBA]

Doom I

The phenomenally successful first-person perspective blaster is upgraded for the 3DO system complete with a brand new episode containing nine levels of new monsters and weaponry. Despite its no-

Not only has 3DO got the biggest and best catalog of 32bit games, but there's plenty more on the way. M2's software line-up is also building up very nicely with some awesome titles deep in development.

show at E3, ADI are still confident it will appear this year. [Soon]

Doom II: Hell On Earth

The current PC mega-hit is bound to be huge on 3DO with all new FMV, higher resolution graphics plus new creatures to interact with... [Early '96]

BMG

Loadstar

A stunning looking FMV blaster using similar technology to *Novastorm*. [Soon.]

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs

A conversion of the hit, cartoon-styled coin-op set in 600 years in the future. [Soon.]

ELECTRONIC ARTS

Foes Of Ali

Stunning 3D, texture-mapped graphics allow you to recreate Ali's amazing career in the best boxing sim ever. [November]

NHL '96

The hugely popular 16bit ice hockey sim is spectacularly converted to the 3DO system. Using the same Virtual Stadium technology as *FIFA*, it's likely to be completely awesome. [April]

Psychic Detective

An innovative and very promising comedy-thriller with the player taking the part of psychic PI, Eric Fox. It's an interactive movie, but with some 500 different variations promises plenty of lastability. [Imminent]

PGA Tour Golf

The 16bit version is just about the best around, so hopes are high for the 3DO version. [Imminent]

Prowler

100 years in the future the Terran Robotic Infantry is locked in combat with hi-tech invaders. Huge fighting vehicles, stunning texture-mapped 3D and complex missions make this another prospective mega-game from WCIII developers, Origin. [January]

Shock Wave 2

400% bigger levels, complete freedom of movement for proper missions, enhanced 3D, 60 minutes of FMV, 25 new enemy vehicles and a choice of three fighters with a big range of selectable weaponry. Should be a huge hit. [Imminent]

Shredfest

Developed by *Road Rash*'s Monkey Doo team, this will be awesome. Besides three types of speed races, there are three trick events and two bonus games. [Early '96]

Wing Commander IV

Mark Hamill and the rest of the crew return for an even more extravagant installment of the epic space opera. [Spring]

ELITE

OnSide

A comprehensive footie sim including a running commentary and management sim. [Imminent]

Power Slide

A 3D rallying game with the emphasis on realism. [Xmas]

Space Ace

Dragon Lair's more varied, slightly more playable arcade sequel comes to 3DO. [Imminent]

ENTERTAINMENT INT.

Braintead 13

Developed by Readysoft, the people behind *Space Ace*, this features more extraordinary FMV cartoon graphics. [Imminent]

GOLDSTAR

BC Racers

A conversion of Core Design's well received *Mario Kart* clone. Featuring Chuck Rock with a host of other prehistoric themed characters, it mixes in plenty of comedy and combat with the one or two-player racing action. [Imminent]

Defcon 5

A stunning looking space adventure strategy game with a very fast, very smooth *Doom*-style graphics engine. [Imminent]

Firewall

A cyberpunk, cyberspace arcade game which pits you against an AI core. Action sequences include a 3D flight-combat sequence over China. [TBA]

Fire Wolves

Yet another mystery project. What is it about GoldStar and fire? [TBA]

Primal Rage

Time-Warner's hit arcade beat-'em-up features some impressively OTT characters. [Imminent]

INFOGRAMES

Alone In The Dark 2

More of the same superb stuff, only bigger and even better, with lots more combat. The NTSC version is out, but for the UK a special, fullscreen PAL version is planned. [Xmas]

Alone In The Dark 3

The final installment. This time set in the Wild West (in a ghost town no less). [1996]

INTERPLAY

Caesar's World Of Gambling

The casino not the emperor plays host to games of chance. [November]

Cyberia

A Silicon Graphic pre-rendered shoot-'em up in the *StarBlade* mould. Looks stunning. [Imminent]

Clay Fighters II: Judgement Clay

A brilliantly quirky fighting game using the highly distinctive graphic technique, Claymation. An awesomely big release. [Imminent]

Casper

An action-strategy game based upon the Spielberg produced film of the classic cartoon. [Imminent]

Descent

A big hit on PC with a spaceship blasting its way through a *Doom*-style 3D landscape. [Imminent]

Last Vikings 2

The original was probably the best arcade-puzzler since *Lemmings*, so hopes are high for the sequel. [Imminent]

Waterworld

The world's most expensive movie, starring Kevin Costner, is turned into a videogame. [Imminent]

JVC

Deadly Skies

An *Afterburner*-style shoot-'em-up. [Winter]

Varuna's Forces

Sci-fi action game which has you piloting a dropship through turbulent planetary atmospheres, then leading a squad of soldiers in tactical *Doom*-style action. [Winter]

MINDSCAPE

Dragon Lore

A mythological adventure with stunning,

pre-rendered graphics from Cryo.
[Soon]

Layer 2: DeathKeep

This AD&D RPG could well give *Doom* a run for its money in the action stakes with a similar perspective, lots of speed, spells and ghoulish enemies. [Imminent]

PANASONIC

BIOS Fear

An ecologically minded strategy game with the player in charge of preserving Earth's last resources. [Soon]

Cyberdillo

A wacky send-up of the *Doom* craze with a cybernetic armadillo armed with a plunger as the hero! [Soon]

Fun 'n' Games

An odd-ball compilation of classics, allegedly. [Soon]

Isis

A puzzle-packed, *Myst*-style adventure only with more animation. [Soon]

Mortal Kombat III

MKII's hugely popular mix of gore, digitised graphics and sophisticated combat moves is uprated with a total of 14 characters, animal transformations and even more moves. Should be huge. [Early '96]

Puzzle Bobble

A funny and fun *Tetris* riff starring the dinos from *Bubble Bobble*. Excellent in two-player mode. AKA: *Bustamove*. [January]

Seal of the Pharaoh

Mediocre Japanese, first-person perspective RPG recently re-dubbed for the American market. [TBA]

Strahl

An interactive movie which has Alex Hawkfield attempting to recover seven crystals, battling golems and even a

dragon. [Soon]

Sword & Sorcery: Curse of Junin

A huge Japanese RPG currently being translated into English. [Spring]

PONY CANYON

F1GP

An officially endorsed, Japanese F1 racing sim. [TBA]

RUNANDGUN!, INC

Duellin' Fireman

A spectacular looking 50:50 mix of arcade action and interactive movie, it's described as an action adventure comedy with plenty of energy and set in weird, mutated environment. Should be good fun. [Soon]

STUDIO 3DO

3DO Decathlon

Produced by the man responsible for Epyx's classic Games series, this is looking red-hot. Up to eight players can compete simultaneously, while real-time 3D athletes are animated using motion capture. The events are 100m Dash, Long Jump, Shot Put, High Jump, 400m Run, Discus, 110m Hurdles, Pole Vault, Javelin and 1500m Run. [Early '96]

Absolute Zero

Set in an Arctic mining colony with plenty of advanced vehicles to play around with in full 3D, this is "a science-fiction simulation along the lines of *X-Wing*, only ours will be much more detailed in the variety of missions, the ships and the strategic planning." Like *Flying Nightmares*, Domark are handling development. [Xmas]

Golden Gate

An innovative, original adventure to uncover buried treasure. [February]

Phoenix 3

An intriguing sci-fi action/adventure set on the planet Galearth. The game mixes side-scrolling Commando action with a flight sim style shoot-'em-up. You must repel enemy invaders by finding pilots, hidden ships and lots of blasting.

[Imminent]

P.O'd

One of the most exciting games in development with cool 3D graphics and an aggressive, adult approach.

Gameplay is *Doom*-style, a huge range of weapons even includes a powerdrill, but more sophisticated with the ability to fly via a JetPack. [Imminent]

SnowJob

Megababe Tracy Scoggins stars as your partner in this FMV battle against organised crime. An adult oriented title, it has all the elements of a movie: action, drama, adventure, violence, drugs and sex. [February]

Star Fighter

Based upon the hit Archimedes game, this awesome title promises to be a *Defender* for the Nineties. Graphics are 3D, texture mapped and very fast, while missions range from sinking enemy fleets to protecting allied squadrons. [Imminent]

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

Disrupter 7

Mark Cerny, of *Sonic 2* and *Way Of The Warrior* fame, heads up this much anticipated mega-game. A sci-fi riff on *Doom*, it features incredible graphics moving amazingly fast. A Hollywood set-designer was used for futuristic level graphics and buzzsaw wielding robots are no less convincing. 3DO themselves rate this very,

very highly. [Early '96]

US GOLD

Johnny Bazooka Tone

A weird, side-scrolling platformer with extensive use of SGI workstations for 3D rendered sprites and backgrounds. The music is great! [Early '96]

Olympic Games: Soccer

Silicon Dreams believes they can beat *FIFA Soccer* and their game engine is already very slick. [Early '96]

Olympic Games: Track & Field I & II

Such is the importance – and cost! – of the Olympics licence there will be two multi-game sports releases. Once again, early reports are encouraging with a 3D fencing game earning raves from those who've seen it. [Early '96]

VIRGIN

Creature Shock

An imaginatively varied FMV blast-'em-up. [Imminent]

Heart Of Darkness

Another *World* for the 32-bit, 3DO dominated next generation, first impressions suggest an absolutely stunning looking – and playing game. Definitely one to look out for. [Winter]

11th Hour

The sequel to the million selling CD-ROM extravaganza, *7th Guest*. Release (on PC) has been put back several times now which suggests that Virgin want it to be something special when it's released later this year. This is an absolutely fantastic, CD-streamed adventure with a horrific bent. *11th Hour* will have either a 15 or 18 certificate upon release, unsurprisingly. [TBA] □ ssw

3DO Magazine

M2 GAMES

AMERICAN LASER GAMES

Shining Sword

A fantasy-themed project with an RPG element. Best of all, it's said to be in full 3D.

'Unknown Title'

ALG have gone on record to say they have another M2 game in development. Both projects could well make their debut in the arcades.

ART DATA INTERACTIVE

Alien Seed

A revolutionary new polygon intensive extravaganza being developed especially for M2. [1996]

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

Race Game

Despite falling out with 3DO in early '95, Crystal are now widely believed to be back on board with this much anticipated M2 project.

ELECTRONIC ARTS

John Madden '96

Unconfirmed as yet, but regarded as almost certain.

Road Rash

Work is rumoured to well under way on this eagerly anticipated mega-game.

INTERPLAY

Descent

Doom with a spaceship rather a shotgun armed psycho. It's likely to be significantly enhanced over the PC game.

Clayfighter III

Likely to be one of the first M2 releases, this should take beat-'em-up claymation action new heights.

Iron Blood.

This is an intriguing project by Take 2, the development team behind *Hell: A Cyberpunk Adventure*.

VR Sports

This isn't a game but a new Interplay brand-name for a series of sports sims which will be appearing on M2. Games so far announced include *American Football*, *Baseball*, *Golf* and *Soccer*.

SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

Top Gun

A flight-sim for the 64bit generation. After lead development on PC, this is due for conversion to Ultra64 and M2.

STUDIO 3DO

M2 Racing

A Formula One racer developed from the M2 racing demo.

Dungeon Game

Doom-type arcade-adventure

BattleSport 2

Cyclone are known to be very keen to do an M2 version of their 3DO I mega-hit.

Return Fire 2

The two-player arcade-strategy game was such a huge hit, this is likely to be one of the first M2 games to appear.

Starfighter 6000

An M2 version of the imminent futuristic flight sim is under consideration, although it could dropped in favour of a *Deathrace 2000*-style blast-'em-up race game.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

Disrupter 7

Although still unfinished, the 3DO I version is regarded as so awesome an M2 sequel is regarded as virtually inevitable.

WARP

D2

This is already being advertised in Japan and will use M2's MPEG chip for razor-sharp, pre-rendered graphics in a supremely atmospheric, adventure.

WILLIAMS

The *Mortal Kombat III* deal is known to be just part of a broader agreement for other coin-op conversions and possibly original titles. Williams is known to be working on a *Virtua Fighter*-type coin-op with MK-style fatalities. It's entirely possible this could run on an arcade version of M2 – a highly cost-effective means for Williams to match Namco and Sega's experience with 3D hardware.

And the story continues in 3DO Magazine

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